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## Do you have the time? Changes in and implications of spouses' time together

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The Pennsylvania State University  
The Graduate School  
College of Health and Human Development

**DO YOU HAVE THE TIME? CHANGES IN AND IMPLICATIONS OF SPOUSES'  
TIME TOGETHER**

A Thesis in  
Human Development and Family Studies, and Demography

by

Jeffrey Phillip Dew

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

Many Americans say they do not spend enough time with their families. Social changes such as increased productivity expectations in the workplace and the movement of mothers into the paid labor force have added to the feeling that family time is scarce. Time is perceived to be an extremely rare commodity in the U.S., and families desire to spend more of it together.

Time allocation in families has enjoyed recent scholarly attention. Some studies have analyzed how gender, class, and labor force participation relate to family time use. Other studies have focused on changes in parent-child time. Despite parents' worries to the contrary, parent-child time has increased over the past 30 years. Very few studies have focused on time use among spouses, however. This three-paper dissertation analyzes research questions related to this understudied area.

The first paper studied whether spousal time has declined over the past 30 years. Although previous research has shown that spouses are doing activities less often together, this study used nationally representative time-diary data to quantify and explain the decline in daily spousal time. The declines were significant – between 50 and 90 minutes per day. Regression and population standardization revealed that increases in married couples' joint hours in the paid labor force and the increased proportion of dual-earner couples explain most of the change.

The second paper investigated the mechanisms that link spousal time and marital satisfaction to understand whether decreasing spousal time matters for contemporary couples. Using nationally representative longitudinal data, this study found that spouses' evaluations of the amount of time they spend together completely mediates the relationship between actual time together and marital satisfaction. That is, if spouses are satisfied with the amount time they spend together their marital satisfaction tends to be high regardless of how much time they

actually spend together. Further, because the actual amount of time that spouses spend together was a weaker predictor of positive evaluations of spousal time than other aspects of time, the declines in spousal time are not likely problematic for spouses.

The final paper investigated the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction. Qualitative studies have found that family time has some very negative aspects. Consequently, if spouses have to give up spousal time to create family time, they may become dissatisfied with their marriage. Using nationally representative data, the analyses showed a positive relationship between family time and marital satisfaction for wives. For husbands, the association between family time and marriage depended on their relationships with their children. Consequently, although some negative aspects of family time do exist for parents, family time does not seem to interfere with parents' marital quality. Rather, the analyses show that family time, spousal time, parents' relationships with their children, and marital satisfaction relate in complex ways.

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## Chapter 1

### Experiencing Time in Marriage

One of Americans' greatest concerns is having enough time to accomplish their goals. Large national opinion surveys find that for many individuals, time has become even more desirable than money (Robinson & Godbey, 1999). Some scholars dispute the reality of Americans' time scarcity, using data to show that individuals have more leisure time now than in the past, or that individuals often spend more time than necessary in an activity (Goodin, Rice, Bittman, & Saunders, 2005; Robinson & Godbey). Despite these studies, individuals' perceptions of reality are important because they shape feelings and behavior (Blumer, 1969). Thus, if individuals perceive time to be scarce they will act in a manner consistent with this belief.

Feelings of time scarcity spill over into family relationships. Over 30% of mothers and 50% of fathers feel they do not spend enough time with their children (Milkie, Mattingly, Nomaguchi, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). Feelings of time scarcity may have partially fueled the increase in time that parents spend with their children. Time diary data has suggested that married fathers have increased the time they spend with their children by 150% (from 2.6 hours per week to 6.5) over a 35-year period (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006). Married mothers have increased the time they spend with their children by about 20% from 10.6 hours per week to nearly 13 hours per week. Other studies have confirmed these increases (Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001; Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). Despite these parent-child time increases, individuals remain concerned that they do not have enough time to build relationships with their children.

In the haste to study parent-child time, research has ignored the relationship between time and couples' marital relationship. For example, although many studies have analyzed how the quantity of parent-child time has changed over time, no study has analyzed trends in spouses' time allocations. Further, few studies have analyzed the mechanisms that link spouses' time

together and their marital quality.

This three-paper dissertation addresses unexamined questions regarding the relationship between time and marriage. This first chapter examines historical and social aspects of individuals' experience of time. It also discusses the theories that may explain the relationship between spousal time (e.g., the time that spouses spend alone together) and marriage. The second chapter is an empirical paper that combines two nationally representative time-diary data sets in a time-series analysis to document how spousal time has changed over a thirty-year period. It also uses regression and decomposition techniques to explain the change. The third chapter is an empirical paper that examines mechanisms that link spouses' time together and their marital satisfaction. Finally, the last chapter is an empirical paper that uses nationally representative data to test whether family time detracts from parents' marital quality.

### Experiencing Time

Though physical measures of time are identical from one period to the next (e.g., the time it takes for the earth to rotate once on its axis), humans interpret their experience of time passing just as they interpret other experiences. Engaging in activity seems to be the key experience to individuals' interpretation of time (Fenstermaker, 1996). Humans base their interpretation of time in part on physiological or psychological phenomena. For example, when an activity demands close attention, time seems to pass quickly (Marks, 1977). Likewise, individuals that engage in activities they enjoy also experience time passing rapidly, whereas when individuals undertake an unpleasant task time seems to "slow down". That these time perceptions are based in part on physiology is shown in experiments that demonstrate a relationship between time perception and nicotine or caffeine consumption (Carrasco, Redolat, & Simón, 1998; Stine, O'Connor, Yatko, Grunberg, & Klein, 2002).

Time is a multidimensional construct. In his seminal work, Zerubavel (1981) defined four dimensions of time. Because engaging in activity allows individuals to experience time, activity also defines the dimensions of time. Duration refers to how long an activity lasts. An activity's rate of reoccurrence indicates how frequently an activity occurs. The dimension of temporal location indicates when in historical or personal time an activity occurred or occurs. Finally, the sequence of events indicates the temporal ordering of multiple activities (Zerubavel, 1981). Since Zerubavel's work, scholars have identified more dimensions of time. Pace is the speed at which an activity occurs, and periodicity refers to whether the events occur with regular frequency (Fraenkel, 2001). Each of these aspects of time can be important, although the salience of these constructs depends on the situation and the individual. Perhaps not surprisingly, each of these dimensions can also elicit interpersonal difficulties (Fraenkel).

Beyond these physiological and psychological aspects of time perception, individuals evaluate time based, in part, on cultural norms. Cultural norms govern how individuals' time interfaces with social expectations. For example, in some cultures appointment times are only rough approximations of when individuals expect to meet. In other cultures, appointments are personal commitments and arriving just a few minutes late reflects negatively on the character of the late individual (Daly, 1996; Robinson & Godbey, 1999). Further, society differs on what activities are considered "good" uses of time. In many cultures, rushing through a meal is rude and "uncivilized" behavior. In these cultures, interacting while eating with others is a valuable activity that humanizes its participants. In other cultures, however, mealtime is less valued and in these societies, individuals may be expected to use mealtime to accomplish tasks. Parents also directly and indirectly socialize their children regarding their cultural norms that govern time (Flaherty, 2002).

Contemporarily, American culture conceptualizes time as a commodity. Above all, Americans value productivity in work, leisure, and relational pursuits. In the early period of the industrial revolution, for example, Benjamin Franklin wrote the now ubiquitous phrase, “Remember, that time is money” (Franklin, 1792). In other words, a productive use of time is to exchange it for material increase. Thus, time has become the necessary capital to produce.

The cultural conception of time as a commodity has implications for individuals’ experience of time. First, and perhaps most importantly, the commodification of time means that individuals can value time as an end in and of itself rather than giving meaning to time through activity. For example, time can be “wasted, saved, and spent” (Daly, 1996). Further, when time becomes an end, activities become subordinate to time rather than giving meaning to it. For example, societies that have reified time and view it as a commodity rank order activities according to how worthwhile they seem (Marks, 1977). Some activities (e.g., paid employment) are seen as wise uses of time, whereas other activities (e.g., care work) are less-valued uses of time (Folbre, 2001). Moreover, using the phrase, “I didn’t have enough time” has become a socially acceptable excuse for leaving socially undervalued activities (e.g., housework) left undone. Yet that same phrase does not excuse leaving socially-valued activities (e.g., paid employment) undone (LaRossa, 1983).

Second, as time has become a commodity, Americans have desired more of it. Expectations of increasing productivity in the market and the home have led to individuals desiring more time to finish more tasks. Desiring more time, and not having it, makes it appear in increasingly short supply. Finally, the rarer a commodity appears the more valuable it becomes, and the cycle continues.

Adding to the feelings of time scarcity and the value of it, is the fact that individuals have

begun to try to get as much done in as little time as possible. Multitasking, hyper-vigilant time management, and outsourcing services increase individuals' productivity. These activities also make time appear even more valuable and scarce, however (Robinson & Godbey, 1999). As individuals attempt to conduct more activities in limited time, their attention becomes even more divided, their pace becomes more hurried, and their psychological experiences become more harried or "rushed" by external forces. This phenomenon, known as "time deepening", may be one of the reasons that individuals feel more busy than previous generations even though individuals have more leisure time now than in the past (Robinson & Godbey).

### Time and Marriage

Given the physical, psychological, and cultural influences on individuals' experience of time, it is not surprising that scholars have linked time and marriage. Initially, researchers viewed spousal time as a dimension of marital quality. Recently, however, scholars have considered spousal time to be a predictor of marital quality. These studies have used a variety of theories to explain the positive relationship between spousal time and marital quality.

### Time as a Marital Outcome

The importance that contemporary spouses and scholars place on spousal time might have baffled married couples from the not-too-distant past. The emergence of spousal time as a marital issue is a rather new idea. Prior to the late eighteenth century, marriage was primarily a matter of survival. Harsh living conditions made choosing the right spouse literally a matter of life and death. Whether the spouses chose each other, or parents chose for them, the purpose of marriage was primarily to ensure the survival of the two spouses, and to allow procreation (Burgess & Locke, 1945). Husbands and wives needed to cooperate to produce necessities (Kessler-Harris, 1981). As standards of living improved, however, the purpose of marriage



slowly changed from survival to companionship (Burgess & Locke).

The more marriage became a companionship, the more important spousal time became. Initially, spousal time was thought to be so important to marriage that it was considered a dimension of marriage rather than something that contributed to marital quality. As companionship became the primary purposes of marriage (Burgess & Locke, 1945), spending time alone together came to symbolize this purpose. Even though companionship initially encapsulated many positive traits of a marriage, spending leisure time alone together slowly became the definition as to whether spouses were experiencing the important marital concept of companionship (Blood & Wolfe, 1960).

The idea of spousal time being a measure of marital quality was finally institutionalized when measures of spousal time became a subscale of the highly influential Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). Lewis & Spanier (1979) hypothesized that spousal interaction was a key indicator of couples' marital adjustment. Thus, the dyadic cohesion subscale of the DAS measured the frequency that spouses engaged in positive interactions (Spanier, 1976). Over a period of thirty years, then, social science made spousal time a measure of marital companionship and, hence, marital quality.

Despite spousal time being an early measure of marital quality, most researchers now use it as a predictor of marital quality. Although it is unknown at what point spousal time became a predictor of marital quality<sup>1</sup>, it is important to note its historical treatment. Some studies still conceptualize spousal time as a dimension of marital quality, and this has implications for the causal direction in the relationship between spousal time and marital quality (see below).

### Social Exchange Theory

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<sup>1</sup> It may be that as the purpose of marriage has moved from companionship to individual development (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Cherlin, 2004), and as women have moved into the paid labor force, that scholars have become more reticent to use spousal time as a dimension of marital quality.

As a predictor, scholars have identified a positive relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction (Kingston & Nock, 1987). Since individuals perceive time to be a commodity, social exchange theory is relevant to this relationship. Social exchange theory attempts to explain interpersonal relationship formation and dissolution using ideas about individual wellbeing maximization. Although not a true economic theory *per se*, social exchange theory contains elements that also exist in economic theory, such as the idea that individuals desire to maximize the benefits of their relationship and minimize the costs. Because cost/benefit calculations can apply to every situation, spouses' time together may play a role in different aspects of the marriage including marital formation, marital quality, and marital dissolution.

Initially, desires for spending more time together may make it more likely that two individuals will wed. Social exchange theory asserts that individuals will enter a relationship when they perceive that the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs, and that the benefits from forming the relationship outweigh the benefits they receive currently (Thibault & Kelley, 1959). Because most spouses live together, and because marital norms emphasize spending time together, unmarried couples may feel that marriage will allow them to spend more time together. It will give them a benefit that they do not already enjoy. Thus, an individual may marry, in part, because he or she desires to spend more time with their partner (Larson & Richards, 1994).

Social exchange theory also explains why time might relate to marital satisfaction during marriage. As individuals remain in a relationship, they subtract the costs of the relationship from the benefits and compare the results (called outcomes), with their expectations for the relationship (called the comparison level or CL) (Nye, 1979; Thibault & Kelley, 1959). When an individual's outcomes exceed or meet the CL, he or she will be pleased with the relationship and

desire to continue in it. If, however, their outcomes fall below the CL, the individual will be dissatisfied with the relationship.

If spouses do indeed marry so that they can spend more time exclusively together, then spending time together likely forms part of the marital expectations or CL. Spouses may have a certain idea of how much time they want to spend together. Married couples might also desire to spend time together with a given frequency or periodicity.

Rather than focus on absolute measures of time they spend together, however, spouses may have relative expectations. Spouses may expect to spend a quantity of time together that is proportional to other activities they engage in. For example, a couple (or a spouse in the couple) may feel they should spend at least as much time alone together as they spend parenting their children. Alternatively, since both spouses are likely to be quite busy, they may have certain expectations about how much of their free time they should be spending together. Rather than expecting a set amount of time together, busy couples may want to spend at least a certain proportion of their free time with their spouse.

Time itself is not the only issue concerning the relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction. Couples may expect to undertake specific activities when they are together. Couples also expect spousal time to be free of negative interactions. Spending hours arguing, for example, will not likely help marital satisfaction. Although the negative interactions by themselves would likely harm the marriage, spouses may also be upset that they invested valuable time to be with their spouse only to have it wasted in negative interactions.

Regardless of the issues that shape couples' expectations about spousal time, if their joint experiences and activities do not meet those expectations, marital satisfaction may decline. Wives report lower levels of marital satisfaction in couples where they use time to engage in

activities that the husbands enjoy but that wives do not (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002). Wives also report higher marital satisfaction when they use time to communicate with their husbands (Holman & Jacquart, 1988). Consequently, as couples meet their spousal time expectations, they will be more likely to be satisfied with their marriage.

Finally, social exchange theory specifies that when couples' relationship outcomes (benefits minus costs) fall below the comparison of alternatives level ( $CL_{Alt}$ ), then couples will likely divorce. The  $CL_{Alt}$  is the minimum level of outcomes that a spouse will accept in the marriage before acting to dissolve it. It is related to a spouses' perception of the outcomes they could receive by leaving the marriage. If the outcomes of the marriage have fallen below the  $CL_{Alt}$ , then a spouse feels that leaving the relationship will provide them with more benefits and/or fewer costs than staying.

Spousal time may relate to the  $CL_{Alt}$  in two ways. First, when spouses divorce, they lose the time they have invested in the marriage (Becker, Landes, & Michael, 1977). That is, within a current marriage, spouses benefit from the time they have invested in it. For example, spending time together with one's spouse may help an individual know how to help the other spouse feel happy. Once the marriage is dissolved, however, the value of time spent together is lost because it will not transfer to another relationship (Pollak, 1985). Thus, if couples have a lot of time invested in their marriage, their  $CL_{Alt}$  might be lower than a couple that has spent less time together. The second way that time might matter to the  $CL_{Alt}$  is if a spouse is dissatisfied with his or her spousal time, he or she may attend more to alternatives (e.g., another romantic relationship) that provide them with companionship that is more satisfactory.

Thus, spousal time may be a resource that couples expect so that they can engage in mutually beneficial activities. Meeting these expectations will enhance the marriage not only

because of the activities, but because spouses may value spending time together in and of itself. Thus, exchange theory is relevant to understanding the relationship between time and marital satisfaction.

### Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is another theory that might explain the positive relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction. Symbolic interactionism posits that individuals “act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them” (Blumer, 1969, 2). Individuals derive these meanings from interpersonal interactions and their interpretations of these interactions (Blumer). Thus, for example, rather than time together helping marital relationships because couples expect to spend time together, spouses may “do marriage” by spending time together. That is, they affirm their sense of couplehood by spending time alone together and interacting (Kingston & Nock, 1987). Consequently, rather than spousal time being an end in and of itself, it may give spouses the opportunity to interact and continue feeling like an exclusive couple.

Spousal time might not just be the “temporal space” needed for interacting; depending on how spouses interpret it, spousal time might also be a powerful signal of marital commitment. Because time is so valuable, when spouses sacrifice time in other activities to spend time alone together, this might show they desire their marriage to be happy and to continue (Parkman, 2004; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). When one spouse shows their interest in nurturing the marriage, the other spouse gains more trust in their partner (Wieselquist, et al.). With renewed trust in their partner, the second spouse may then reciprocate by interacting positively with their spouse. Thus, spending time alone together might be one of many different positive ways for spouses to show each other their continued commitment to the relationship.

## Reverse Causality and Selection

Although these two theories are plausible explanations of the positive relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction, other possibilities exist. For example, the causal direction may be opposite to what these theories purport. The few studies that still use spousal interaction as a measure of marital quality (e.g., Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003) draw attention to the fact that marital satisfaction may induce spouses to spend more time alone together rather than time alone together predicting satisfaction. Evidence for marital quality predicting spouses' time together does exist (Bailyn, 1993; Larson & Richards, 1994; White, 1983; Zuo, 1992). It is also probable that the relationship is reciprocal.

Another alternative possibility is that the positive relationship between spouse time and marital satisfaction is spurious. Spouses' characteristics may positively predict their spending time together and their marital satisfaction. For example, individuals with strong orientation toward family commitment may spend more time with their spouses than individuals with less of a family orientation. Being strongly oriented toward family life may also predispose individuals to feel positively toward their marriage. Thus, the positive relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction may occur because of selection rather than any real relationship between the two variables. Interestingly, research has never tested whether the relationship between time together and marital satisfaction is endogenous.

Because these two alternative possibilities exist, interpreting the statistical relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction must be done cautiously. Although most scholars studying marriage have posited that the relationship flows from time together to marital quality, this assumption has not been adequately tested. Consequently, reverse causal relationship and selection cannot be ruled out.

## Explaining Recent Scholarly Interest

Many converging factors have led to the recent scholarly interest in time. By including spouses' time together as a dimension of marital adjustment, the idea that spouses needed to spend time together was institutionalized (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Researchers using the popular DAS had to consider spousal time when variables they tested related to the dyadic cohesion (e.g. spousal time) subscale. Thus, for example, many studies noted a decline in the dyadic cohesion subscale following spouses' transition to parenthood (Feldman, 1981; Houseknecht, 1979; Kurdek, 1993; Miller, 1976).

Another factor that increased interest in time allocation was women's movement into the paid labor force. As more married mothers began working for pay, researchers, and the public, became interested in how this reallocation of women's time influenced their wellbeing and their families' wellbeing. Initially, researchers studied whether the combination of work, spousal duties, and maternal roles demanded too much time and effort of women. They asserted that women might experience "role strain" and may not have enough time or energy to attend to all these various obligations, including relationship obligations (see Spitze, 1988 for a review).

Feminist scholars rejected the role-strain premise of these studies and instead questioned the persistence of traditional gender role expectations despite mothers' movement into the paid labor force. These researchers analyzed the inequity in the gendered division of household labor and often incorporated different dimensions of time. For example, they often compared the frequency of husbands' and wives' housework or the duration spent in different chores. These studies showed that wives were spending far more time in than unpaid labor than husbands were (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Thus, by introducing notions that gender structures individuals' time allocation, feminist scholars showed that time could be an area for research on power,

negotiation, and inequality (Daly, 1996; Sayer, 2005).

Other changes in the paid labor force also contributed to scholarly interest in time. The “ideal-worker” norm gained strength over the last five decades of the twentieth century. The ideal-worker norm states that employers have the first claim on their employees’ time and energy (Bailyn, 1993; Williams, 2000). The norm also asserts that employees should make their workplace productivity their top priority and not let anything, including family relationships, interfere with it.

Although this norm has existed since the industrial revolution began, it intensified during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. As business competition became fiercer following the 1950s, employers began to demand more productivity from their employees. Salaried employees were expected to put in more overtime and the workweek increased for highly educated/skilled workers (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). The new term “face time” encapsulated the idea that employees needed to be seen at work simply for the sake of showing that they were dedicated workers.

Married mothers were held to an even higher standard of the ideal worker norm because when they entered the paid labor force they were forced to show that they could compete with men while still adequately performing as mothers. Ironically, many mothers are now in the unenviable position of having to hide their family commitments at work while still asserting that their family is more important to them than their career (Garey, 1999; Williams, 2000). The stresses of simultaneously satisfying the ideal worker norms and parenthood norms have added to scholarly interest.

The ideal of accomplishing more in less time has also reshaped childhood. Children are no longer expected to find ways to occupy their own time; such tasks are now the purview of parents (Stearns, 2003). Middle-class children are also much more likely now to spend their



leisure time in structured, adult-directed activities (Lareau, 2002). They are also expected to reach higher performance levels in everything from hobbies to standardized tests than they were in the past (Stearns). Achieving these levels necessarily requires children to spend more time in each structured activity. Not surprisingly, as children's time allocations become more structured, parents are also forced to allocate time for transporting them from activity to activity, watching their children participate, and even acting as leaders of these activities (Lareau). This may contribute to adults' feelings that time is in short supply.

Finally, perhaps one of the biggest catalysts of scholarly interest in time was the publication of Schor's (1991) book *The Overworked American* that built on many of these social changes. Schor's main contention was that Americans are working more hours annually than before and have less time for other activities. These findings spawned a whole research literature to describe contemporary time use. Although many of Schor's conclusions have been questioned (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Roanes, Ilg, & Gardner, 1997; Robinson & Godbey, 1999) they certainly led to increased scholarship on family time allocation.

This dissertation focuses on some of the understudied issues in the time-use literature. Despite an intensive focus on describing family time, researchers have missed the time that spouses spend together. Many studies analyze trends in parent-child time and trends in the gendered division of household labor. However, very few studies have examined whether spouses have changed the amount of time they spend together. Spousal time trends are worth studying, though, because they may show how couples are responding to social changes. Further, they may be relevant to contemporary spouses' marital quality.

Relatedly, the importance of spouses' time alone together has also gone unchallenged. With a few important exceptions (Crawford et al., 2002; White, 1983), most studies simply

accept as fact the idea that spouses' time together enhances marriage. The literature continues to perpetuate this idea, but few scholars have examined the mechanisms behind this relationship. Consequently, this dissertation also examines why spousal time and marital satisfaction relate.

Finally, the intersection of family time and spousal time has gone unexamined. Married parents have to decide how to allocate their time among many different demands. Qualitative research suggests that spousal time often takes a back seat to family time, yet family time is often disappointing to parents (Daly, 2001; Simon, 1995). This dissertation uses nationally representative data to quantitatively test whether family time negatively relates to marriage as the logical extensions of qualitative studies may suggest.

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## Chapter 2

### Times Have Changed: Trends in Spouses' Daily Time Alone Together

## Abstract

Numerous social changes have induced researchers to document the trends in the amount of time that parents spend with their children. Scholars have generally ignored trends for time that spouses spend alone together, however. This study delineated 30-year trends in spouses' daily time alone together and assessed possible explanations of the trends. Using nationally representative time-diary data, this study found that married couples have substantially reduced the daily amount of time they spend alone together. Changing work patterns explained most of the declines. Contrary to expectations, having minor children at home moderated the declines such that couples with children at home experienced smaller declines in spousal time than childless couples.

As society has changed, the institution of marriage has also changed. Legislation has made divorce more accessible and the social stigma of divorce is less now than in the past. Social mores have also become more tolerant of nonmarital sexual behavior and nonmarital childbearing. These changes in social norms, along with better contraceptive technology, have contributed to a separation of parenthood from the institution of marriage. Antidiscrimination laws, changes in work norms, and stagnating/declining wages for men have drawn more women – especially married mothers – into the paid labor force. The large rise in dual-earning couples has allowed couples to continue to increase their standard of living and has largely eliminated the breadwinner-homemaker model of marriage.

As these marital changes have occurred, researchers have been interested in documenting change in family behavior. One particular trend that has been frequently analyzed is change in the amount of time that parents spend with their children. Time diary studies have shown that parents spend at least as much time with their children now, as in the past (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001; Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). Although parents have maintained or increased the amount of time they spend with their children, it is unknown whether spouses have been able to maintain their time alone together (spousal time).

Studying changes in spousal time is important for two reasons. First, an analysis of spousal time would show how marital behaviors are shifting to accommodate social changes. On the one hand, married couples face greater work pressures now than in the past (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Schor, 1991). Further, parents face more of an obligation to spend time with their children (Daly, 2001; Stearns, 2003). These changes may require spouses to decrease spousal time. On the other hand, increased expectations of equity and emotional intimacy within marriage (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003; Cherlin, 2004; Glenn, 1996) may encourage

spouses to spend more time alone together. Consequently, it is unknown whether spousal time has decreased, stayed the same, or even increased.

A second reason to study change in spousal time is that previous research indicates that it increases spouses' marital quality and stability (Gager & Sanchez, 2003; Hill, 1988; Kingston & Nock, 1987; Larson & Richards, 1994; Parkman, 2004). Although qualifications to these findings do exist (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002; Gager & Sanchez), both theory and married couples themselves support spending time together as one of the main ways to enhance marriage (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). Although analyzing the relationship between spousal time and marital quality is impossible using current time-diary data, studying time trends provides scholars with the social context for such an analysis.

Using nationally representative time-diary data, this study assesses whether spousal time has changed over the past 30 years. The analyses examine overall change in spousal time as well as changes in the amount of time spouses spend in interactive activities. Using multivariate analyses and population standardization techniques, this study also analyses whether social changes have contributed to spousal time trends.

### Marital Time Trends

Research on trends in spousal time is sparse. Only two studies have investigated changes in spousal interaction. These studies, based on nationally representative data, found that spouses interact less often now than in the past (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003; Rogers & Amato, 1997).

Although these studies show important marital changes, they leave questions unanswered. First, both studies used subjective measures of interaction that do not relate to any temporal framework. Rather, the measures asked spouses how often they participate in six

common activities together. Thus, the interaction decline remains unquantified. Second, these studies did not distinguish between spouses' time spent alone together and spouses' time spent together in the presence of others. Spouses' time that they spend alone together is an important predictor of marital quality and stability (Hill, 1988; Kingston & Nock, 1987). Consequently, it remains unknown whether spouses' time alone together has declined or whether they have reduced time together with others in order to protect their time alone together.

### Social Change and Explaining Changes in Spousal Time

Individuals experience and use time according to cultural constraints (Daly, 1996; Robinson & Godbey, 1999; Zerubavel, 1981). In contemporary American society, time is generally viewed as an economic commodity (Daly, 1996; Fenstermaker, 1996; Robinson & Godbey). One property of commodities is that once they are allocated toward one project, they cannot be allocated to another project. Although individuals try to get as much out of each minute as possible through multitasking, the amount of information that humans can simultaneously attend to limits the number of activities individuals can carry out at the same time. Thus, married couples have to make decisions about how they will allocate their time.

These time allocation decisions are subject to contextual demands on couples' time (Fenstermaker, 1996; Juster & Stafford, 1985). For example, couples have to allocate time to earning money. Parents need to spend time assisting and nurturing their children. Individuals expend time recreating to refresh themselves psychologically. Amidst these other demands, spouses have to decide how much spousal time they want or need.

As society has changed, the nature of couples' time demands has changed as well. For example, couples contribute more hours to paid employment, through both longer workweeks and the larger amount of dual-earner couples (Department of Labor, 1999). Thus, social changes

in the contextual demands on each spouse's time allocation may explain trends in spousal time. Changes in employment demands and changes in parenting demands are likely the two strongest explanations of these trends.

### Increasing Employment Demands

Changes in paid-work patterns likely influence the trends in spousal time. Patterns of paid work have changed in important ways. Changes in the U.S. economy and constant rises in the standard of living have made it difficult for families to have only one wage earner (Department of Labor, 1999). Further, the proportion of individuals working long workweeks (50+ hours) has doubled from 5% to 11% (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). Moreover, the use of overtime has increased between 1.5 – 3 hours depending on the industry analyzed (Department of Labor, 1999; Hetrick, 2000). Finally, though married individuals are less likely to work non-day shifts than single individuals are, 9% of married women and 15% of married men do (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). These work behavior changes have influenced couples' time allocation. Married couples' time jointly devoted to the labor market has increased by 14 hours per week and 717 hours per year (Department of Labor, 1999; Sayer, 2005).

These work behavior changes have occurred in a context of changing work norms. The "ideal-worker norm" has grown strong in contemporary society, especially for individuals in highly paid occupations (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Williams, 2000). The ideal-worker norm asserts that the workplace is entitled to as much of its employees' time and energy as it needs (Bailyn, 1993; Williams, 2000). Under the ideal-worker norm, employees should not allow family problems (e.g., a sick child) to interfere with work productivity.

Following, or not following, the ideal-worker norm has consequences. Individuals who follow the ideal-worker norm by working long hours at work and by not bringing family issues

to their work place are rewarded with more pay, positive employee evaluations, and promotions (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Williams, 2000). Those who violate the ideal-worker norm by spending more time with their family and less time at work face negative short-term and long-term occupational consequences, even when they take advantage of company-provided work-life opportunities. Thus, many individuals have strong, normative incentives to allocate more time to work and less time to family life.

In addition to changing work norms in the workplace, work norms have changed within marriage. Both spouses expect to work in most contemporary couples (Thornton & Young-Demarco, 2001). Further, men value earning abilities in prospective partners much more now than they did in the past (Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, & Larsen, 2001). Thus, contemporary spouses may not expect as much spousal time now as other couples did previously. In support of this idea, estimates of spousal time are low. In two studies, spouses spent 20 minutes or less talking together on the day they were surveyed (Kingston & Nock, 1987; Larson & Richards, 1994).

Employment relates to spousal time. As couples devote more hours to the workplace, they spend less time together (Kingston & Nock, 1987; Nock & Kingston, 1984). Further, when couples work at different times during the workday, called “off scheduling”, the loss in spousal time is even greater (Kingston & Nock, 1987; Presser, 2000). Based on these studies, it appears that couples make a strategic choice between jointly contributing more hours to paid employment and spending time together.

Because joint work hours negatively relate to spousal time, they are likely to play a role in the change in spouses’ time together over the past 30 years. The slope of the change in spousal time likely depends on how many joint-work hours couples contribute to the labor force.

That is, the amount of joint work hours will moderate the relationship between the year of the survey and the amount of time that couples spend together. For example, couples that contribute 80 hours to the work force are likely to have had a larger decline in the amount of time they spend together than couples who contribute 40 joint work hours. All other things being equal, the more hours a couple jointly contributes to the workforce, the more they will have some hours off-scheduled. Since more couples are contributing many joint hours and are having more off-scheduled hours now than in the past, a joint work hour by year interaction is likely.

Hypothesis 1: The decline in time that spouses spend alone together is greater the more hours a couple jointly contributes to the work force.

Another way to test whether changes in work behaviors and norms have led to declines in spousal time is to compare the true estimates of changes in spousal time with estimates of the trend that have been standardized to reflect 1975 work behaviors. Using population standardization techniques, simulated estimates can be created of what the change in spousal time would have been had work behaviors not changed between 1975 and 2003. If the difference between the standardized and unstandardized estimates is sizable when they are compared, then the changes in the variables used to standardize the population explain some of the trends (Firebaugh, 1997). Since joint work hours and the proportion of dual earners have increased, these two variables are standardized.

Hypothesis 2: When the 2003 estimates of spousal time are standardized for 1975 work behaviors, they will show a smaller decline in time together than the unstandardized 2003 estimates.

### Increasing Parenting Demands

Another shift in American family life is parenting. Interestingly, competing social forces



operate in this regard. On the one hand, Americans are increasingly delaying or foregoing childbirth. Many more couples are choosing to remain childless now than in the past (Bachu & O'Connell, 2000). Furthermore, married couples that want children have extended the gap between their marriage and their first child, and they are having fewer children (Bumpass, 1982; Ventura, Abma, Mosher, & Henshaw, 2004).

On the other hand, contemporary parenting is an extreme time commitment. In spite of decreased fertility, society expects parents to invest more in their children now than in the past. As women moved into the workforce, a powerful social norm regarding motherhood pulled back on them. The norm of motherhood asserts that children need extensive maternal nurturing and guidance (Garey, 1999; Williams, 2000). Though the norm of motherhood had existed since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the norm took on a new shape in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. As birth rates continued to decline and children became more emotionally and socially valuable, the norm of motherhood began to assert that children were vulnerable entities that require substantially higher parental inputs than in the past (Stearns, 2003; Zelizer, 1994). This norm may have changed, in part, because raising children began to economically tax parents rather than economically benefiting them (Zelizer). Thus, by investing in their children, parents moved to “protect” and “maximize” their investment.

Fathers also feel the norm of motherhood, or in less sex-specific terms, the norm of involved parenthood. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, society began to assert that fathers needed to spend more time with their children (Griswold, 1997). Though the specific ways society expected men to interact with and socialize their children changed over the twentieth century, the call for more paternal involvement was constant (Griswold, 1997; Pleck & Pleck, 1996; Stearns, 2003). Evidence that men are aware of the norm of involved parenthood is found

in the fact that more fathers than mothers report feeling that they do not spend enough time with their children (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Milkie, Mattingly, Nomaguchi, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). If men did not subscribe to the norm of involved parenthood, they would not worry whether they were spending enough time with their children.

Parents have responded to the norm of involved parenthood. Contemporary parents feel more pressure now than in the past to spend their time directly engaged with their children (Coltrane, 1996; Stearns, 2003). Moreover, children have first claim on their parents' non-working time (Daly, 2001; Simon, 1995). For example, parents assert that the majority of their free time goes to spending time with their children and that their spouse gets very little of that time. Over time, working mothers have also cut back on housework and personal activities to spend time with their children (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000).

Because of these changes, mothers of today spend about the same time with their children now as in the past, and some studies have found increases (Milkie et al., 2004; Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001). Fathers have increased the amount of time they spend with their children as well (Sandberg & Hofferth; Sayer, 2005; Sayer et al., 2004). Most parents feel the norm of involved parenthood – even mothers who stay at home with their children have increased the amount of time they spend with their children by nine hours per week between 1975 and 2000 (Bianchi et al. 2006). Further, parents are more likely now than in the past to use the family time they have to entertain or otherwise serve their children (Stearns, 2003).

One strategy that spouses might enact to spend time with their children is to cut back on spousal time. Because the norm of involved parenthood is so strong, this strategy may lead to an interactive effect between having children in the home and the decline in spouses' time together. If society expects more of parents now, and parents expect more of themselves, then individuals

with minors at home should have a greater decline in spousal time than individuals without minors in the home. Not surprisingly, leisure time for mothers and fathers with children at home has declined over time but this is not the case for men and women overall (Robinson & Godbey, 1999; Sayer, 2005).

Hypothesis 3: Decreases in spousal time are greater for married couples with minor children at home than couples without minor children at home.

### Marital Adaptation

So far, the evidence indicates that married couples have probably yielded to increased work and parental demands and have strategically decreased their spousal time. However, social changes in the meaning of marriage may offset these declines in certain activities. Specifically, even though changes in work and parenting demands may limit the amount of spousal time overall, changes in marital norms may encourage couples to spend as much spousal time engaged in interactive activities now as in the past.

As western society has become more individualistic and secular and has valued self-actualization over other social goods (Lesthaeghe & Surkyn, 1988), the whole *raison d'être* of modern marriage has shifted from survival to self-fulfillment through a committed intimate relationship (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Cherlin, 2004). These intensely intimate relationships require time as the medium through which couples develop and maintain their togetherness (Kingston & Nock, 1987; Larson & Richards, 1994).

Another change, increasing egalitarianism in marriage (Amato et al. 2003; Thornton & Young-Demarco, 2001), may allow women to have more control over the way spouses use their time. That is, wives may now be more able to influence their husbands to spend time with them rather than spending time in other pursuits. Declines in sex-specific organizations (e.g., men's

and women's charitable organizations) and the increasing convergence in the ways that men and women use their time (Robinson & Godbey, 1999; Sayer, 2005) may further enhance the effect of egalitarianism on spousal time.

Although time allocation is a zero-sum activity, these new marital norms may lead spouses to try to protect their interactive time together despite changes in work and parenting demands. Parents have shown that they will sacrifice personal activities to be with their children (Sayer et al., 2004). Although competing with work and childcare obligations might be difficult, spouses might be willing to sacrifice time spent in other activities to spend time alone in interactive activities with each other (Kingston & Nock, 1987). They may cut back on joint chores (e.g., shopping together), for example, to protect their interactive time.

Although spouses can find enjoyment in any activity they do together (Larson & Richards, 1994), interactive activities such as talking, eating together and engaging in recreation activities together are associated with higher marital quality and marital stability (Hill, 1988; Kingston & Nock, 1987). Consequently, despite probable downward trends in overall spousal time, spouses may protect their spousal time in interactive activities that contribute most to their overall relational well-being.

Hypothesis 4: Spouses spend the same amount of spousal time in interactive activities currently as in the past.

## Method

### Data and Sample

The data for this study came from two nationally representative time-use surveys, the Time Use in Economic and Social Accounts, 1975 – 1976, and the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) conducted in 2003. The 1975 survey was conducted by the Institute for Social Research

at the University of Michigan (Juster, Thomas, Courant, Duncan, Robinson, & Stafford, 2001). The survey relied on a national probability sampling framework. The researchers randomly sampled individual households from primary sampling units. They then visited the participants and helped them to fill out a time-diary. The sample is nationally representative of the continental US population in 1975.

The ATUS 2003 is the first time-use study conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). It utilized a subsample of the Current Population Survey (CPS) and oversampled race and ethnic minority groups. The BLS generates the CPS data set from a national probability sample. The CPS contains over 60,000 U.S. households and the BLS collects employment data on CPS participants monthly. The BLS also includes survey supplements on different topics (e.g., fertility histories) in different months. Participants remain in the sample for eight months, after which time they are dropped from the sample. The BLS continually recruits more participants to maintain sample levels. In 2003, the first ATUS was given to a subsample of CPS participants who had completed their eight month survey rotation.

Like the 1975 time-use study, the ATUS 2003 asked respondents to produce a time-diary on the previous day's activities. To generate time-diary data, participants chronologically listed the beginning and ending times of the activities they undertook in the previous day. They also reported who was with them while they were engaged in each activity. Using the codebooks from these two studies, the activity codes were standardized so that activities could be compared across time.

For the purposes of this study, participants in the 1975 time-diary study and the 2003 ATUS were included if they were married and at least one of the spouses was employed. These selection criteria yielded a total sample of 9,674 participants. 818 participants were from the

1975 study and 8,856 participants were from the 2003 ATUS.

Time diary methodology offers some advantages over traditional survey questions about time use. First, time diaries explicitly tie data to “clock” time so they offer precise estimates of time use. Second, research has shown that time-diary methods produce better estimates of time in non-work activities than “stylized” questions that differ from survey to survey (Juster & Stafford, 1985; Robinson & Godbey, 1999). Finally, time-diary methods also reduce participants’ tendency to give socially desirable answers because it is difficult to create a coherent fabrication when it is situated in a chronological report of other activities (Robinson & Godbey; Stinson, 1999).

Because time diary data sets are generally tied to zero-sum 24-hour periods, by using multiple data sets, trends in time allocation can be investigated (Joyce & Stewart, 1999; Sayer, 2005). Most time diary data is based on standardized methodology that has participants indicate the beginning and ending times of their activities in the previous day. Further, the activity codes used are often based on Szalai’s (1972) cross-national time-use surveys. These commonalities make comparing time-use estimates from different surveys possible, both longitudinally and cross-nationally. Many recent studies have compared time allocation in different activities to understand how Americans’ lives have changed. The technique of comparing time use estimates from different cross-sectional time-diary data sets is commonly used to study changes in parent-child time, changes in work and leisure time, and changes in gendered differences in time allocation (Bianchi et al., 2006; Robinson & Godbey, 1999; Sayer, 2005; Sayer et al., 2004). Thus, time-diary data is well suited for use in understanding how spousal time has changed over the past 30 years.

A question arises as to how well suited the Time Use in Economic and Social Accounts,

1975 – 1976 and the ATUS 2003 are for this purpose. That is, the sampling strategy, research protocols, and activity coding must be close enough for the two data sets to be comparable. The sampling strategies of the two surveys are similar. In both the 1975 sample and ATUS, researchers randomly sampled households from primary sampling units (PSU) that mirrored census population data. Although the CPS oversamples race and ethnic minority members, and individuals from less-populous states, in generating the smaller ATUS sample, former CPS participants were randomly sampled. Weights included with the ATUS make ATUS-generated estimates nationally representative. Both the 1975 and ATUS data were weighted in all of the analyses in this study.

The survey protocols for the two studies were also similar. In the Time Use in Economic and Social Accounts survey, researchers went to participants' homes and filled out a time diary for the participant regarding the previous day. In the ATUS, researchers telephoned participants and filled out a time diary on computer regarding the participants' previous day. Although one time-diary was conducted in person and one was conducted by telephone, this should not raise comparability issues as both methods yield similar results (Harvey, 1993; Robinson & Godbey, 1999). The important issues are that in both studies the researchers helped individuals fill out their time diary and that they only required the participants to recall the previous day's events. Time diary data about the previous day has been found to be accurate and to be free from recall errors (Harvey).

To standardize the activity codes for the analysis, the two codebooks were assessed. Most of the coded activities in the two surveys were equal, and only the value assigned to the activities needed to be changed. This was to be expected since most time diary surveys use activity coding schemes based on Szalai's (1972) work. The only activity coded in 1975 that

was not coded in 2003 was eating meals at work. Analyses were run coding this activity as “eating meals” or “paid employment”. Since most individuals did not eat meals at work with their spouses in 1975, the different coding strategies for this category did not make any difference. Consequently, this category was assigned to “eating meals.” Thus, the activity coding schemes of the 1975 and 2003 data were easily standardized.

In a final test of whether the 1975 and 2003 data were comparable, another recently collected nationally representative time-diary data set was analyzed. The Family Interaction, Social Capital, and Trends in Time Use (FISCT) was collected in 1998. Estimates produced using the 1998 data were not statistically significantly different from the 2003 estimates (analysis not shown). Spousal time trends from 1975 to 1998 replicated the 1975 to 2003 trends. Because the sampling strategy, research protocols, and coded activities for both surveys were easily standardized, and the trends could be replicated using different data, the author is confident that the trends identified in this study arise because of actual changes in spousal time, and not because the surveys were different.

### Measures

The two dependent variables in this study were the total time alone that the participant spent with their spouse on the diary day, and the time alone that the participant spent in interactive activities with their spouse on the diary day. Interactive activities included talking, eating, or participating in recreational and leisure pursuits together. These outcomes were reported in minutes since the surveys record time in minutes.

The key independent variables centered on social changes in work and parenting. The number of work hours the spouses jointly contributed to the labor force was derived by adding participants’ reports of their own usual weekly work hours and their spouse’s usual weekly work



hours. A dummy variable indicated whether the couple had children living at home (0 for no children at home, 1 for children in the home). A second dummy variable captured the year of the time-use survey (0 for 1975, 1 for 2003). A third dummy variable measured whether the couples used a dual- or single-earner strategy (0 for single-earner couples, 1 for dual-earner couples). Finally, two-way interaction variables between the year and children variable, the year and joint work hours variable, and the joint work hours and parent variable were included in the model, along with a three-way interaction between all three dummy variables. The analyses also included age, race, gender, total family income, and education as control covariates. The variables age, education, and family income had missing cases. Missing data was imputed using maximum likelihood estimation.

The effects of children were tested using the dichotomous variable of children at home/no children at home instead of adding number of children at home and the ages of children to the analysis. It is true that the more children that married couples have, the less time they spend together (Feldman, 1981; Houseknecht, 1979). Further, although no studies have analyzed how spousal time changes as children age, research has shown that infants and young children demand more parental time than older children (Feldman, 1981). In fact, as adolescent children exercise greater autonomy, they often spend less time with their parents (Larson & Richards, 1994).

The reason a dichotomous variable was used was to delineate the average spousal time trends for couples with children at home compared with individuals who had no minor children at home. Including the number and ages of children would have afforded me the opportunity to compare differences in time trends among individuals with children at home as well as the differences between individuals with children at home and individuals without children at home.

Such an analysis would have led to finer-grained, but more complicated, findings. Given the already complicated analysis and potential for numerous findings, a simple treatment of children was adopted.

Descriptive statistics on the variables at each wave are found in Table 2.1. Since spouses spend considerably more time together on weekend days, regressions for weekdays and weekend days were conducted separately to avoid needing to use multiple three-way interaction terms. Consequently, the descriptive results in Table 1 were reported separately by year and by whether a participant reported about a weekday or a weekend day.

### Analyses

The analyses were multivariate regression analyses that were weighted using provided survey weights. The two outcome variables, total time alone together and interactive time alone, were regressed onto the predictors. Using the regression coefficients, predicted values of time together were generated and plotted for couples that have 40, 60, and 80 joint work hours at both time points.

Additional analyses were conducted to examine the extent to which population changes between the 1975 and 2003 account for the trend in spousal time. Population standardization is useful for examining how much differences between two populations explain a phenomenon. Using population standardization, scholars can statistically equalize one population based on a second population's characteristics and then compare the two populations on an outcome. For example, demographers and epidemiologists will often give one population the age-distribution of a second population and then compare the mortality rates caused by a certain disease of the two populations. By doing this, scholars can understand whether and to what extent different population characteristics account for differences that arise between the two populations.

Applying population standardization techniques to time-series data in one population allows researchers to relate population changes in an outcome to other population changes (Firebaugh, 1997). This is the technique employed in this study. Because behavioral changes that occurred in the U.S. between 1975 and 2003 (e.g., the increase in dual-earner couples) likely influence spousal time trends by making these characteristics equal in both populations this study can identify whether these changes relate to spousal time trends.

Some argue that population standardization is necessary *before* assessing changes in time use rather than after assessing it. This approach has merit because it analyzes changes in time allocation across similar populations, e.g. “comparing apples to apples” (Robinson & Godbey, 1999). Unfortunately, however, if the analysis is restricted to analyzing changes in standardized populations, the true change in spouses’ behavior cannot be known. Consequently, examining only standardized change does not reflect how spouses’ time use has truly changed. Since both the true estimates of change in spouses’ time alone together and the standardized estimates are relevant to the research question, this study examines both.

The population standardization was conducted after the regression results from the initial analyses (described above) were found. Using these regression coefficients, the 2003 data was standardized for various 1975 population characteristics and predicted values of spousal time were extracted. First, the 2003 sample was standardized to have the same proportion of dual- and single-earner couples and the same number of joint work hours as the 1975 sample. A second model had both of these variables standardized and also had the same proportion of couples with minors at home in 2003 as in 1975. Predicted estimates of change were obtained after each standardization and were compared to the true estimates.

## Results

## Descriptive Results

Weighted means showed that spousal time has declined (see Table 2.1). On weekdays, spousal time declined by nearly an hour and on weekend days the average decline was 20 minutes. Contrary to hypothesis 4, however, interactive spousal time also declined substantially – by about 40 minutes on weekdays and 30 minutes on weekend days.

Social changes that may explain the time trends followed expected patterns. Couples' joint work hours increased by four hours per week. Further, the proportion of dual-earning couples increased from about 45% to 65%. Couples with minors in the home decreased by about 9% from 60% – 51%.

## Weighted Least Squares Analyses

The results for the multivariate, weighted least squares analyses supported some of the hypotheses, but also revealed some surprises. Total spousal time decreased on weekdays (see Table 2.2, Model 1; Figure 1). Interestingly, though, a joint work hour by year interaction was not significant. Contrary to hypothesis 1, then, the spousal time declines did not depend on how many hours they jointly contributed to the labor force.

Although couples with children at home had less spousal time than couples without children had, the presence of children moderated the declines in spousal by suppressing time declines rather than by augmenting them. For example, couples with children at home had a 45 minute decrease compared to a nearly 90 minute decrease for couples without children at home (see Figure 2.1). Further, the interaction between having minors at home and joint work hours significantly decreased the main effect of joint work hours for those with minors at home (see Figure 2.1). Thus, the predicted difference in spousal time between couples who worked 40 joint hours and couples who worked 80 joint hours was much smaller for those with children at home

(17 minutes) than the difference between couples that worked 40 and 80 joint hours but did not have children at home (45 minutes). These findings all ran contrary to Hypothesis 3.

Trends in spousal time on weekend days showed similar patterns (see Table 2.2, Model 2). No joint work hour by year interaction emerged, and year by presence of children interaction was significant. Couples with children at home experienced no decline in spousal time but couples without children at home declined by 90 minutes (see Figure 2.2). The fact that couples with children had very little spousal time on weekends to begin with qualified this finding.

The multivariate analyses of interactive spousal time offered little support for hypothesis 4, because interactive time generally declined. On weekdays, couples experienced a 40-minute decline in interactive spousal time (see Table 2.2, Model 3; Figure 2.3). In line with Hypothesis 4, parents were somewhat able to protect interactive time on weekend days, though. Couples with children experienced relative stability with a 14 minute decline while those without children experienced a nearly 77 minute decline (see Table 2.2, Model 3; Figure 2.4).

#### Population Standardized Estimates

Two models with population standardization were run. The first model standardized the 2003 population to have the same proportion of single- and dual-earners and same mean joint-work hours as in 1975. The second model was the same as the first standardized model, except that the 2003 population was also standardized to have the same proportion of couples with children at home as in 1975. Table 2.4 details the difference between the spousal time in 1975 and 2003 under each standardized model. Changes due to population shifts were assessed by comparing the declines in the first column (the unstandardized estimates) with the estimates in the second and third columns (the population-standardized estimates).

Had the proportion of single- and dual-earner couples and mean joint work hours

remained constant over time, spousal time would have declined much less than it did on weekdays and weekend days. In some cases, spousal time would have even slightly increased – indicated by those cells that have positive values. Adding the 1975 proportion of couples with children at home brought the declines down closer to their “true” (e.g., column 1) values, but not by much. On weekdays, these two population shifts accounted for 45% – 84% in the declines in spousal time and on weekend days, they accounted for all of the change.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe trends in spousal time to identify how social changes have influenced marriage. A second purpose was to indirectly examine the strength of marital norms vis-à-vis work and parenting norms. The results show that spousal time has generally decreased including spousal time spent pursuing interactive activities. Further, the findings indicate that these declines have occurred in part to satisfy increased work demands over the past 3 decades. Having minor children at home, however, has not been a cause of declines in spousal time. Rather, having children at home decreases the declines in spousal time.

One strategy that married couples use to cope with increased work demands is to cut back on spousal time. This is not too surprising given the strong demands on spouses’ time that work generates. The population-standardized findings were particularly strong, showing that the change in work strategy from single-earner to dual-earner couples and increase in joint work hours accounted for at least half of the decline. Couples have responded to these demands by having less spousal time on weekdays and, for couples without children at home, on weekend days too.

Increased work demands cannot fully account for declines in spousal time, though. First, the decline is uniform, no matter how many hours a week the couple jointly contributes to the

work force. Second, the differences in total spousal time between couples with 80 joint work hours and couples with 40 joint work hours are small – at most 45 minutes per day, and they are usually less than that. Spending only 45 minutes less together per day despite working 40 additional hours per week seems like a relatively small difference. Third, the population standardization analyses indicated that changes in the proportion of dual-earners in the population accounted for only 45 – 85% of the decline. Other changes must exist that are leading married spouses to spend less time together.

Turning to the effects of children, it is not surprising that having minors in the home reduces the amount of time that spouses spend alone together. Of all the variables in the models, the presence of children had the largest main effect of time together, dropping spousal time by as much as 200 minutes per day. Further, adding the 1975 proportion of children to the standardized results slightly increased the simulated declines in time together.

When the trends are used to compare the strength of marital norms and parenting norms, however, some unexpected conclusions emerge. With the exception of interactive time together on weekdays, having children at home actually contributed to stable trends in spouses' time alone together. These findings refute the idea that increased expectations of parents may lead to less time together. Couples with children at home have not had to cope with increased parental expectations by cutting back on spousal time. Rather, having children in the home actually encourages a stable trend in spousal time.

The simplest explanation for the presence of children keeping spousal time loss low is that of selection. Because fewer couples are having children, couples with children at home are a more select group now than in the past. That is, contemporary couples that place a high premium on family relationships may be more likely to become parents. These couples may be

more willing to make an investment in children and may also expect more spousal time. Consequently, any pro-family characteristics that would predict that couples would have children at home might also predict that these couples want more spousal time.

Another possibility is that couples with children at home do not have much spousal time to lose in the first place. With only 26 – 136 minutes together alone on any given day in 1975, parents really could not lose much more spousal time. Going below 30 minutes of time together may negatively influence marriage and so couples may work to stay around that threshold. By contrast, couples without children at home had 154 – 327 minutes of time together in 1975. These couples had more room to decrease their spousal time.

A third explanation is that with the rise in egalitarianism, parents are more committed to joint parenting. Since joint parenting requires that the couple spend more spousal time discussing the children, negotiating about their care, and planning activities, this may lead couples to spend more time alone. This idea is not supported in the data, however. The trend for parents' time talking together is either flat or shows a slight decline depending on the model. Thus, couples do not spend more spousal time planning to parent jointly.

This study is not without limitations. The first problem is a limitation of the data itself. Very few large-scale time-diary studies collect data on both spouses. Although the 1975 data did, the ATUS 2003 did not. Consequently, like most studies of time diaries, this data suffers from single-reporter bias. Thus, the strengths of the findings rely on how accurate and truthful the participant was in reporting their time-use on the survey day. Some studies that use other methods of evaluating time use, such as experience sampling method (ESM), show that when both spouses are given an opportunity to report on their activities, spouses' reports of doing activities "together" do not always agree (Larson & Richards, 1994). Thus, these findings are



limited because only one spouse was able to report whether they were with their spouse during an activity. Time use literature has not yet developed rules for data on family members that do not agree with each other, but without data on both spouses this study certainly could not attempt to reconcile multiple families' time-use records.

A second major limitation is that the ATUS 2003 did not collect reports of "secondary activities." Secondary activities were those activities that individuals engaged in at the same time they were engaged in the primary activity (e.g., multitasking). Multitasking has increased over time in American society and so it is possible that couples were interacting at the same time they were doing other activities. Thus, to the extent that spouses interact while doing "noninteractive" activities and then report on the noninteractive activities, these trends may underestimate how much time spouses are engaging in interactive activities. For example, spouses might be talking with each other at the same time while engaging in housework. If the interviewed spouse reports the housework instead of the talking, the time spent talking would be missed.

A third limitation is the issue of only having two time-points. This forces a linear structure on the trends that may not reflect true historical change. That is, the drop in spouses' time may have been constant and linear, or it may have occurred suddenly. Knowing the shape of the decline might help identify the mechanisms behind the shift. For example, if the decline in time together parallels the curvilinear rise in married women's labor force participation then this would better explain the decline. At the very least, the identified linear trend should be interpreted cautiously.

A final limitation is that time diary data usually lacks measures of individuals' subjective assessments of activities. Other time-use methods such as ESM or Day Reconstruction Method

(DRM) often ask individuals to quickly state how they feel as they report on the activity that they are experiencing (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004; Larson & Richards, 1994). These methods can then give richer data about individuals' experiences than time diaries can. Data on participants' feelings as they engage in different activities would be especially useful in studying spousal time because then assertions about interactive time could be tested. For example, having subjective data could explore whether interactive time was more positive for spouses than engaging in other activities together.

Despite these limitations, this study adds to knowledge about contemporary family change by showing how marital behavior has changed in response to increased work demands and other social changes. These demands have exacted a toll on total spousal time and on their interactive spousal time. However, the findings also indicate that increasing work demands are not the only thing that has contributed to the decline.

One implication of this research concerns marital quality. Time-diary studies have shown that time together in interactive activities enhances marital quality and stability (Hill, 1988; Kingston & Nock, 1987). The implication of this is that marital quality should have suffered, then, since time together has declined substantially. Declines in marital satisfaction resulting from lost time together may not have occurred, though, because marriages have changed in ways that both enhance and erode marital quality (Amato et al., 2003).

Unfortunately, since few studies have analyzed the mechanisms that account for the positive relationship between spouses' time spent alone and marital satisfaction, the relationship between declines in spouses' time together is still unknown. Thus, marriage research would be enhanced by studies that critically examine the relationship between spouses' time together and marital quality.

These findings also question how much the changing norms of marriage really influence behavior. Married individuals claim to expect much more from their marriage now in terms of emotional intimacy than couples have expected in the past (Cherlin, 2004; Glenn, 1996). Thus, the meaning of marriage has shifted in ways that ought to encourage couple's spending time alone together, especially in terms of interactive time. Interactive time declined, however. It may be that although couples expect closer relationships, married couples likely understand the current demands of daily life. Alternatively, spouses may value using time to enhance themselves by investing in their careers, social pursuits, etc. Thus, in absolute minutes of time together, couples may not expect to spend as much time together now as in the past, even though they value emotional intimacy.

Future research might profitably focus on how much time couples expect to spend alone interacting together. Spouses may not expect each other to spend an absolute amount of time together, but rather might expect each other to spend a significant amount of their free time together. Understanding these expectations may help scholars understand how current marriages function despite lost spousal time.

Another fascinating finding that emerged was that the increasing social demands of parenthood are not associated with declines in spouses' time alone together. This finding is counterintuitive and goes against some of the qualitative literature that argues that children are a drain on marriage (Simon, 1995). At the very least, these findings show that children influence their parents' time alone together no more now than in the past. They also suggest that something about having minor children at home facilitates parents keeping their time together. This finding is important because it shows that although children require large investments of parental time, new social norms regarding parental investment have not overcome marital norms

of couple togetherness.

Future research should follow up on this finding. Research has not investigated the marital implication of spouses' spending time with children or together as a family. Although qualitative research has shown that individuals should avoid romanticizing the concept of family time, no quantitative research shows whether spending time with children or having family time contributes to or diminishes marital well-being. Such an investigation would be important and would examine how different time demands influence family relationships.

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Table 2.1

## Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Weekdays		Weekend Days	
	1975 Mean (STD)	2003 Mean (STD)	1975 Mean (STD)	2003 Mean (STD)
Total Time Alone with Spouse	177.33 (182.72)	120.38 (181.29)	215.36 (243.1)	197.41 (168.65)
Interactive Time Alone with Spouse	119.05 (127.06)	82.75 (131.51)	138.94 (168.03)	111.35 (110.69)
Couple Joint Work Hours	60.96 (22.71)	65.04 (29.82)	61.15 (24.72)	64.8 (18.9)
Minors at Home	.59 (.49)	.51 (.60)	.61 (.48)	.52 (.37)
Dual-Earners	.47 (.49)	.67 (.57)	.46 (.49)	.65 (.36)
Age	40.03 (13.05)	44.27 (14.09)	40.17 (13.05)	44.05 (8.86)
White, Non-Hispanic	.91 (.28)	.76 (.52)	.89 (.30)	.76 (.32)
Education	12.10 (2.81)	13.51 (3)	12.02 (2.88)	13.47 (1.94)
Total Family Income	11.36 (3.74)	11.66 (3.23)	11.55 (3.97)	11.71 (2)
Gender (1 = Female)	.53 (.49)	.51 (.60)	.47(.49)	.50 (.38)
<i>N</i>	607	4334	211	4522

Table 2.2

## OLS Predictors of Spousal Time

Variable	Model 1 Weekdays: Total Time Alone	Model 2 Weekend Days: Total Time Alone	Model 3 Weekdays: Interactive Time Alone	Model 4 Weekend Days: Interactive Time Alone
Intercept	46.27**	28.74	38.87***	-7.18
Year	-63.15***	-34.87*	-39.70***	-39.01***
Couple Joint Work Hours	-.68***	-.40*	-.42***	-.19†
Minors at Home	-107.88***	-197.12***	-78.11***	-109.08***
Year by Joint Work Hour Interaction	-.39	-.52	-.13	.55
Minors by Joint Work Hour Interaction	.68***	.43	.47***	.24
Year by Minors Interaction	41.66*	91.41**	17.41	65.33**
Year by Minors by Joint Work Hours Interaction	.70	.75	.35	.58
Dual-Earners	8.80	13.57	6.3	3.37
Age	.51*	.67	.24	1.06***
White, Non-Hispanic	11.40†	32.23***	6.98	16.21**
Education	-.65	1.54	-.92	1.38
Total Family Income	-.02	-.10	-.38	-1.80†
Female	-7.12	-12.72†	-18.38***	-23.59***
R <sup>2</sup>	.17	.23	.16	.20

†  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 2.3

## Population Standardized Estimates of Spousal Time

	Unstandardized 1975 – 2003 Declines	Decline if joint work hours and proportion of dual-earners had remained constant	Decline if joint work hours, proportion of dual-earners, and proportion of couples with children at home had remained constant
Weekdays			
<u>No Children at Home</u>			
Total Time Alone with Spouse	-88.56	-39.59	-49.25
Interactive Time with Spouse	-39.7	-4.03	-11.02
<u>Children at Home</u>			
Total Time Alone with Spouse	-46.9	2.07 <sup>a</sup>	-7.59
Interactive Time with Spouse	-39.7	-4.03	-11.02
Weekend Days			
<u>No Children at Home</u>			
Total Time Alone with Spouse	-91.54	28.23 <sup>a</sup>	6.05 <sup>a</sup>
Interactive Time with Spouse	-77.89	-33.73	-46
<u>Children at Home</u>			
Total Time Alone with Spouse	-.13	119.64 <sup>a</sup>	97.46 <sup>a</sup>
Interactive Time with Spouse	-14.19	31.59 <sup>a</sup>	19.32 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Represents a simulated increase rather than a decline.

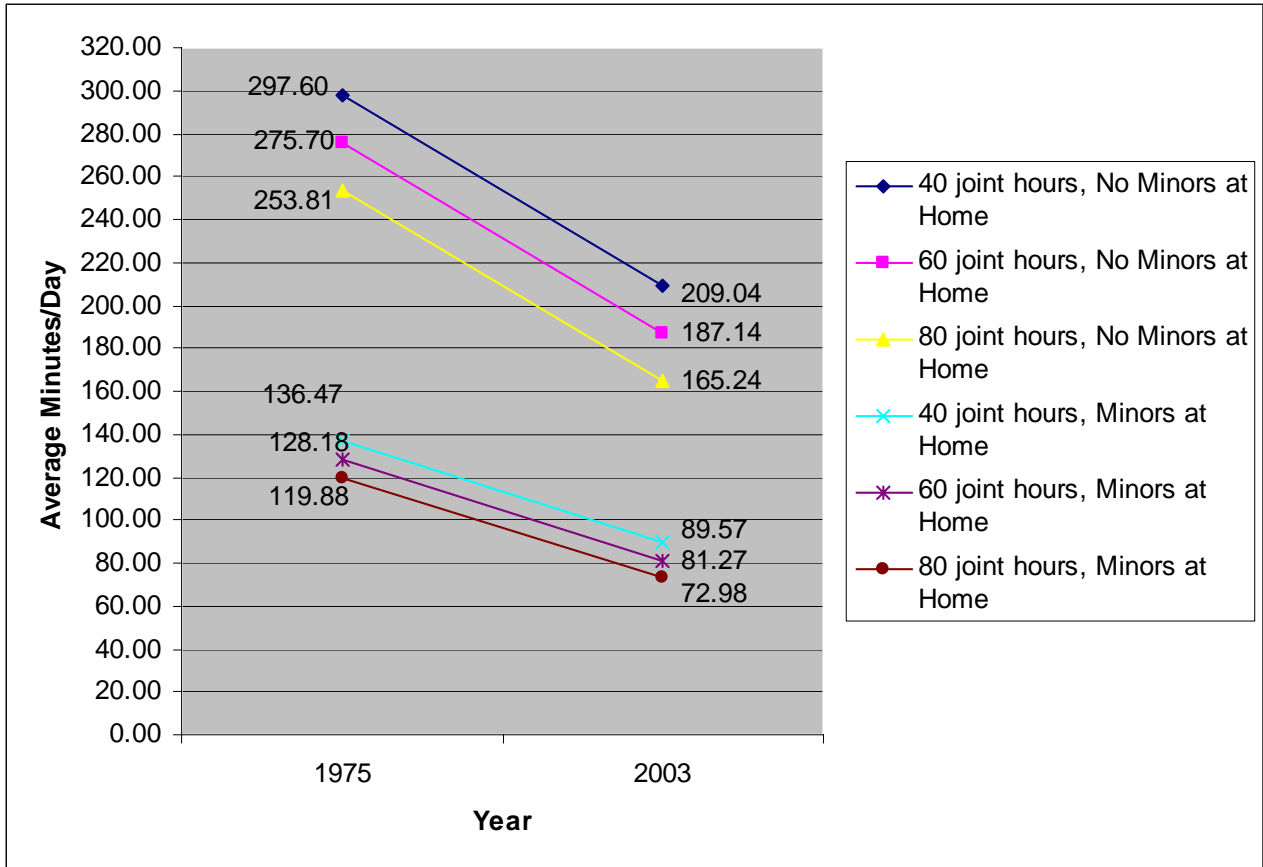


Figure 2.1

Predicted Changes in Weekday Total Spousal Time Alone by Joint Work Hours and Presence of Children.

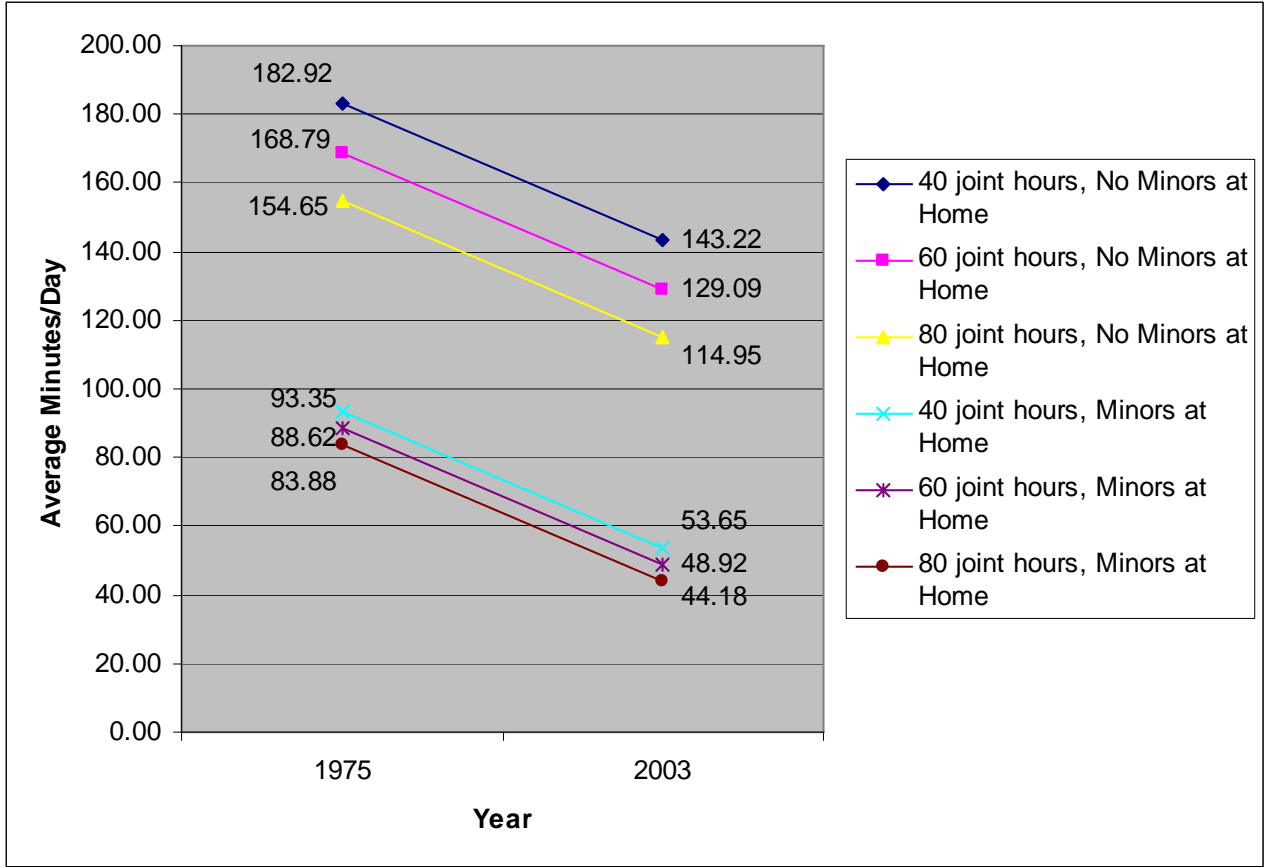


Figure 2.2

Predicted Changes in Weekend Day Total Spousal Time Alone by Joint Work Hours and Presence of Children.

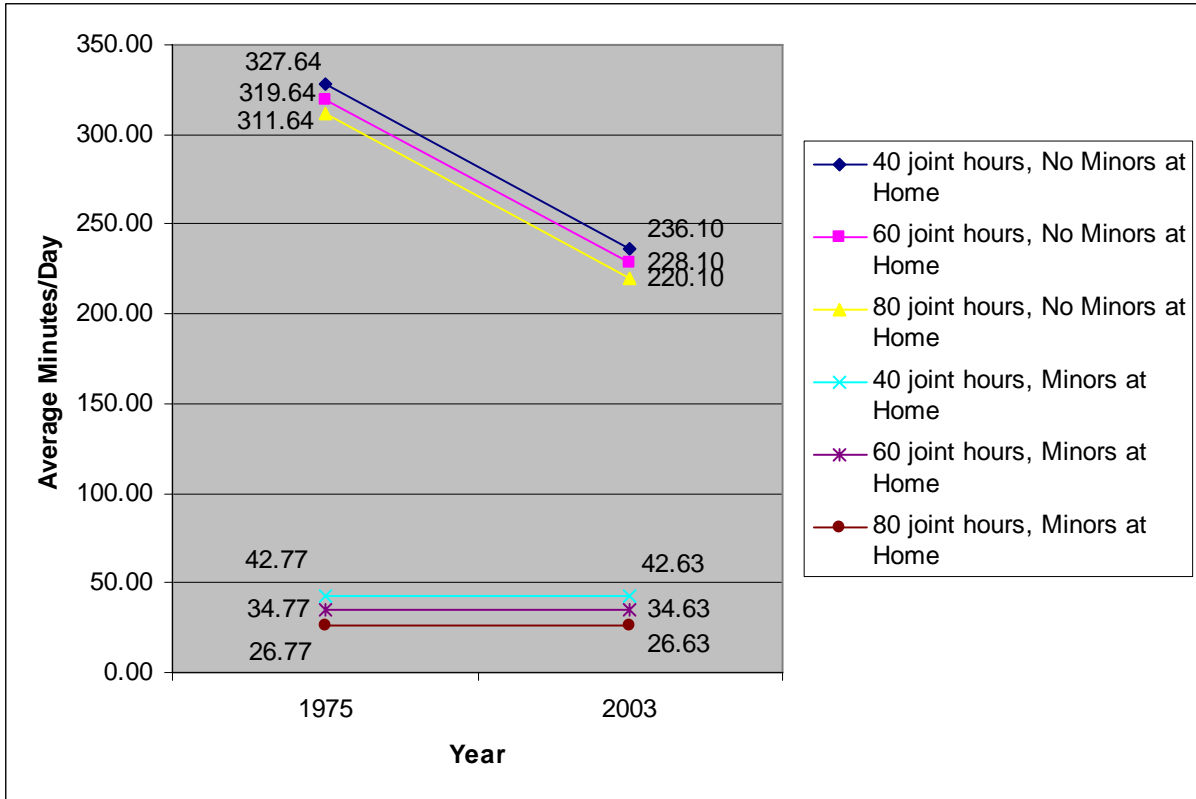


Figure 2.3 Predicted Changes in Weekday Interactive Spousal Time Alone by Joint Work Hours and Presence of Children.



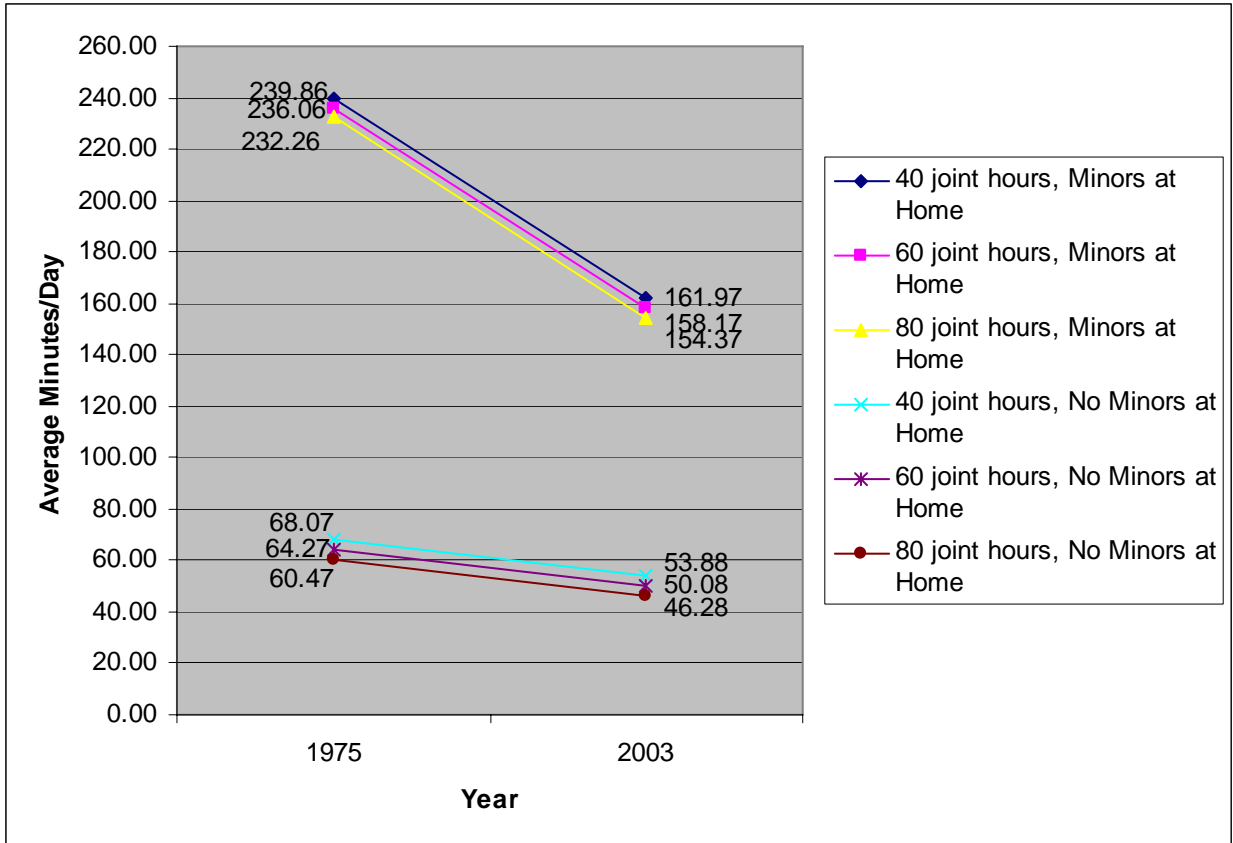


Figure 2.4

Predicted Changes in Weekend Day Interactive Spousal Time Alone by Joint Work Hours and Presence of Children.

## Chapter 3

### Only a Matter of Time? Explaining the Relationship between Spouses' Time Alone Together and Marital Satisfaction

## Abstract

Spouses have lost time alone together over the past thirty years. The marital implications of this loss are unclear because research has rarely examined the mechanisms that link spouses' time together and marital satisfaction. Using data from the National Survey of Families and Households ( $N = 3,861$ ), this study tests whether spouses' subjective evaluations of time spent together mediate the relationship between the frequency of their time alone together and marital satisfaction. Satisfaction with the amount of time spent together did mediate this relationship. Predictors of satisfaction with amount of time together were also examined. Surprisingly, past a certain threshold, the more available time that spouses spent together, the less satisfied they were with the amount of time spent together. Consequently, contemporary spouses' marital satisfaction has probably not declined despite lost time together.

The majority of Americans report that they have too much to accomplish in the time they have. Perceptions of feeling rushed have increased over the past 40 years (Robinson & Godbey, 1999), and these feelings of being pressed for time extend into family relationships. Many parents, for example, do not feel that they spend enough time with their children (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Milkie, Mattingly, Nomaguchi, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). These perceptions of time pressure relate to social changes in what individuals expect to be able to do in the amount of time they have, in work attitudes and behaviors, and in Americans' desired consumption levels (Hochschild, 2005; Jacobs & Gerson; Milkie et al.; Robinson & Godbey; Schor, 1998).

Despite individuals reporting that they do not have enough time with their families, time-diary data reports that social changes have had mixed effects on families' time together. Parent-child time has increased over the past 30 years (Bianchi, 2000; Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). All fathers, and mothers out of the labor force, have increased the amount of time they spend with their children, and mothers in the labor force have maintained or slightly increased the amount of time they spend with their children (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Sayer et al.). When spouses' time alone together is considered, however, different findings emerge. Unlike parents' time with children, spouses have actually lost time alone together (spousal time) (Dew, 2007). Even spousal time in quality, interactive time has declined. The marital implications of spousal time declines are unknown, though, because current research on the relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction is unclear on how these factors relate.

This study examines possible mediators of the relationship between the frequency of spouses' time together and marital satisfaction. Specifically, spouses' subjective evaluations of the time they spend together are tested to see whether they link spouses' frequency of time alone together and future marital satisfaction. Potential predictors of subjective evaluations of

spouses' time alone together are also investigated. To evaluate these questions, this study uses data from the National Survey of Families and Households ( $N = 3,861$ ), a nationally representative, longitudinal study.

### Spouses' Time Together and Marital Satisfaction

Initially, a direct positive relationship between spousal time and future marital satisfaction is intuitive, especially because of the way that Americans view time. Individuals think about and experience time in a culturally constructed manner (Daly, 1996; LaRossa, 1983; Marks, 1977; Robinson & Godbey, 1999). Contemporary American culture conceptualizes time as a rare commodity. For example, in American social lexicon individuals "spend," "use," and "save" time (Daly; Robinson & Godbey). Further, national opinion polls show that time is even more valued than money (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Robinson & Godbey). As with other commodities, the scarcer time is, the more valuable it becomes, and the more individuals control and maximize its use (Daly; Robinson & Godbey).

Because of the value of time, when spouses spend time together they are giving each other "gifts" (Parkman, 2004) that can enhance marriage. Spousal time allows spouses to draw closer together (Hill, 1988; Larson & Richards, 1994; Wilcox & Nock, 2006). They also use spousal time to help maintain a sense of couple identity (Kingston & Nock, 1987). These studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between spouses time alone together and marital satisfaction. Thus, the more frequently spouses spend time alone together the greater their marital benefits will be and the more satisfied they will be with their marriage in the future.

Despite these findings, a direct relationship between the frequency of spousal time and future marital satisfaction is suspect. Some of the positive relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction is due to selection, for example (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002;

White, 1983). That is, couples that are satisfied with their marriage spend more time together. Additionally, the marital benefits derived from spending time together may depend on moderating variables such as gender or the extent to which each spouse enjoys the shared activity (Crawford et al.; Gager & Sanchez, 2003; Larson & Richards, 1994; White). The institution of marriage may also have changed in ways that allow interaction to decline without harming marital quality (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003). Thus, without examining the mechanisms that link spousal time and marital satisfaction, it is impossible to know whether declines in spousal time have influenced contemporary spouses' marital satisfaction.

Scholars have used many theories to explain the positive relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction. Some use symbolic interaction theory and assert that spousal time is a way that spouses "do marriage," – spousal time allows couples to feel like a couple and reaffirm their relationship (Kingston & Nock, 1987). That is, as spouses spend time together they send messages to each other and other individuals that they are a couple. Reaffirmations of their relationship serve to strengthen the marriage.

Other scholars assert that the specific activity couples share may be important. Compatibility theory asserts that similar spouses will be more likely than dissimilar spouses to spend time together. Similar spouses are more likely to enjoy their time together, and to be more satisfied with their marriages (Crawford et al., 2002). Further, similar preferences for specific leisure activities are better predictors of spouses' interaction quality than many demographic and social characteristics (Houts, Robins, & Huston; 1996).

The most common way of linking time and marital satisfaction is through a category of theories that assert that spousal time enhances individual spouses' wellbeing. Scholars assert that in the short term, spousal time allows spouses to interact and feel more emotionally close (Gager

& Sanchez, 2003, Hill, 1988; Wilcox & Nock, 2006). In the long term, spending time together allows spouses to get to know each other better and become more adept at pleasing each other (Hill; Parkman, 2004). These short-term and long-term benefits of spousal time then enhance spouses' feelings about their marriage. Interestingly, with the exception of Crawford et al.'s (2002) work, few studies have tested whether symbolic interaction theory, compatibility theory, and exchange theory actually mediate the relationship between time and marital satisfaction.

This study uses social exchange theory, which fits in the last class of reviewed theories. This theory posits that satisfaction with a relationship arises from comparing the actual "outcomes" of the relationship (e.g., benefits minus costs) with the expected benefits and costs, called the "comparison level" (Nye, 1979; Thibault & Kelley, 1959). When the outcomes exceed expectations, satisfaction with the relationship results. Dissatisfaction with the relationship occurs when the outcomes fall short of expectations. Thus, expectations for spousal time may be the link between spouses' frequency of time together and marital satisfaction. Social exchange theory is used in this study because it fits the cultural viewpoint that time is a commodity or an end in itself. That is, because time is so valuable, spouses may feel entitled to a certain amount of spousal time. Additionally, they may expect the benefits that spending time together is supposed to bring about. This idea of expecting time and benefits from one's marriage certainly fits the idea that the purpose of marriage has changed from survival and companionship to spouses' personal development (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Cherlin, 2004; Glenn, 1996). The data used also has questions about whether spouses achieved their spousal time expectations.

One expectation that may relate spousal time and marital satisfaction is the expectation of having positive interactions. Happily married couples will be more motivated to spend time with

their spouse because their interactions they have are more likely to be positive than are unhappily married couples' interactions. Although unhappily married couples do experience pleasant interactions, their interactions often become negative when they spend time together (Larson & Richards, 1994). These observations imply that frequent time alone together will only lead to marital satisfaction if spouses can realistically expect to enjoy being together (Larson & Richards; White, 1983). Consequently, an interaction between Wave 1 marital satisfaction and spouses' frequency of time alone together likely predicts Wave 2 marital satisfaction.

Gender may influence the relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction. Wives derive more satisfaction from marital interactions than husbands do (Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Larson & Richards, 1994; Gager & Sanchez, 2003). Thus, the rewards of frequent spousal time together may be greater for women than they are for men. Wives' reports of spousal time have been shown to positively predict marital satisfaction, while husbands' reports of time alone together have not (Holman & Jacquart; Larson & Richards). Consequently, gender may influence the relationship between frequency of time alone together and marital satisfaction.

Social exchange theory also asserts that marital satisfaction arises only when the outcomes (rewards minus costs) exceed the spouse's expectations, or comparison level (Nye, 1979; Thibault & Kelley, 1959). Consequently, various expectations likely play an important role in the relationship between spousal time and their marital satisfaction (Gager & Sanchez, 2003). That is, couples may have certain expectations about the time they spend together. If these expectations regarding time together are not met, then they are likely to be dissatisfied with their marriage. In one study, for example, the expectation of enjoying time together was important. The relationship between spouses' time together and their marital satisfaction depended on whether spouses, especially wives, enjoyed the activities they engaged in (Crawford



et al. 2002).

In addition to expectations of enjoying their joint activities, spouses may have expectations about the amount of spousal time they have. One reason that couples wed is so that they can spend more time with each other (Larson & Richards, 1994). These expectations of time together may even rise to the level of spouses feeling that they are entitled to a certain amount of their spouses' time. Not every couple desires to be alone together as frequently as possible, though. Rather, each spouse has their own expectation of how frequently they want to be alone together. Even though spouses may not specifically quantify their expectations of time together, spouses may evaluate whether the amount of time they are spending together is adequate. These judgments about the adequacy of spousal time may mediate the relationship between frequency of time spent alone together and marital satisfaction.

Beyond the benefits of spousal time (e.g., closeness), one reason that spouses may expect a certain level of time together is that it shows that they still desire to invest in the relationship. Interpersonal theory, a theory closely related to social exchange, asserts that if either spouse sacrifices to satisfy their partner's desires, they demonstrate that they value their spouse and are committed to the relationship (Van Lange et al., 1997; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). Using one's free time to be with one's spouse may represent a powerful sacrifice (Parkman, 2004), especially if a spouse's free time is limited. Thus, satisfaction with the amount of time together is likely to act as a powerful mediator between the frequency of spouses' time alone together and future marital satisfaction.

The extent to which satisfaction with the amount of spousal time mediates the relationship between time together and marital satisfaction may vary by spouses' age or the couples' marital duration. Young individuals and/or newlywed couples may expect to spend

more time together than retired couples. Further, not meeting these time expectations might more strongly relate to marital satisfaction for younger couples than for older couples.

Parenthood is another age-related issue that could complicate the relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction. When couples have minor children in the home, their spousal time declines (Feldman, 1981; Houseknect, 1979). Further, parents may view some of the time that they spend with their children as time they could be spending alone with each other. In other words, parents may view the adequacy of their spousal time less positively than non-parents or than parents whose children have moved away. This may especially be the case when children are young or if parents have many children (White, 1983). The relationship between spousal time, the time that parents spend with their children, and couples' marital satisfaction is likely to be complex and is beyond the scope of this study. However, the relationship between family time, spousal time, marital satisfaction and different aspects of parenthood, including the number of children and adolescents that parents have, are considered in the final paper of this dissertation.

#### Predicting Spouses' Satisfaction with the Amount of Spousal Time

If social exchange theory is correct, and satisfaction with the amount of time together mediates the relationship between the frequency of spousal time and marital satisfaction, then predicting spouses' satisfaction with the amount of time together is important. Very few studies have investigated the predictors of subjective views of time (Marks, 1977). In one recent exception, scholars found that work hours negatively predicted parents' reports of spending sufficient time with their children (Milkie et al., 2004). Despite a lack of previous studies to guide this investigation, social exchange theory provides some likely predictors of spouses' satisfaction with the amount of time they spend together.

### Frequency of Spousal Time

The most obvious predictor of spouses' satisfaction with the amount of time together is the spouses' frequency of spousal time. If satisfaction with the amount of time together mediates the relationship between frequency of spousal time and future marital satisfaction, then by definition frequency of spousal time will predict satisfaction with the amount of time together (Baron & Kenney, 1986). Moreover, spending time alone together can provide some valuable marital rewards (Kingston & Nock, 1987; Parkman, 2004; Wilcox & Nock, 2006). Thus, spouses who are together more frequently will be more likely to be satisfied with the amount of time they spend together.

### Marital Satisfaction

Happily married spouses may be more satisfied with their spousal time than unhappily married spouses, regardless of the frequency of it. Some of the processes of social exchange theory have been implicated in the way spouses view their marriage. Social exchange theory posits that spouses in satisfactory marriages have more to gain by a continuation of the marriage than do spouses in unsatisfying marriages. Thus, spouses in satisfactory marriages have an incentive to view their spouses and marriage in more positive terms than spouses do in unsatisfactory marriages regardless of actual behavior. Happily married spouses do indeed view their spouses and marriages more positively than their actual marital situation may warrant (Fowers, Lyons, & Montel, 1996; Murray, Holmes, & Griffen, 1996). Extending the findings of these studies indicates that happily married spouses will view the amount of time they spend together more positively than unhappily married spouses regardless of the actual frequency of time they spend alone together.

### Using High Proportions of Free Time to be Together

Between a social norm that treats time as a valuable commodity and the high demands of modern life, culturally acceptable conditions or activities may exist that excuse spending less time with one's spouse. Like most societies, American culture values investing time in some activities over others (e.g., paid employment over sleep) (LaRossa, 1983; Marks, 1977). Underinvesting in less-valued activities is socially acceptable, especially when a lack of time is used as an excuse (LaRossa; Marks; Robinson & Godbey, 1999).

Married couples likely understand the current demands of daily life, especially since most married couples use a dual-earner strategy. Understanding the day-to-day demands of life may allow couples to partially separate the actual frequency of spousal time from their subjective assessments of it. Instead of focusing on the absolute amount of time they spend together, spouses may focus on the proportion of their free time that they spend with their spouse. For example, a wife may be frustrated that she has little time to spend with her husband. However, if she uses what available time she does have to be alone with her husband, then she may still be satisfied with their spousal time even though they spend time together infrequently.

When a spouse uses their free time to create spousal time, he or she is demonstrating that their spouse and the marriage are important to them (Van Lange et al., 1997; Wieselquist, et al., 1999). However, using one's free time to be with one's spouse past a certain level may offer redundant information about commitment to one's spouse and marriage. Further, spending a higher proportion of free time together past a certain point may offer diminishing marital returns because individuals also need to allocate some of their free time to personal activities. Thus, a threshold effect may operate in the relationship between spouses' proportion of free time spent together and satisfaction with the amount of spousal time. That is, the relationship between spouses' proportion of free time spent together and their satisfaction with the amount of time

spent together may begin to attenuate past a certain point.

### Perceived Marital Unfairness

Distributive justice theory is also relevant to whether spouses are satisfied with the amount of spousal time. Distributive justice suggests that perceptions of fairness within marriage are important to understanding how individuals feel about their marriage. This theory asserts that unfairness in the relationship leads to relationship dissatisfaction (Deutsch, 1985; Major, 1987). That is, spouses who perceive their marital situation to be unfair to themselves will become dissatisfied and act to change or dissolve the marriage. As marriages have become more egalitarian (Amato et al., 2003; Thornton & Young-Demarco, 2001), the importance of perceived fairness within marriage has increased (Gager & Sanchez, 2003).

Distributive justice and social exchange theory are similar and they intersect through the medium of expectations within the marriage. The key factor underlying spouses' feelings of unfairness is a sense of entitlement, or expectations that certain outcomes will occur (Major, 1987). If spouses feel they are entitled to a certain marital outcome but do not receive it, they perceive marital unfairness and will be much more dissatisfied than spouses who do not feel entitled to a marital outcome and do not receive it.

Perceived unfairness may moderate the relationship between measures of time together and satisfaction with the amount of time together. That is, the relationship between different measures of time together (frequency of time together and proportion of free time together) and satisfaction with the amount of spousal time may depend on whether individuals perceive their marriage to be fair. If a spouse perceives their marital relationship to be unfair, frequent spousal time or using a greater proportion of their free time to create spousal time may exacerbate feelings of inequality. In this scenario, spouses' time together may be unpleasant or provoke

feelings of anger or ambivalence toward their spouse. These feelings may make spousal time and proportion of free time together negatively relate to spouses' satisfaction with the amount of spousal time.

### Gender

Issues of perceived fairness and marital equality are inseparable from gender. Gender differences in leisure time, for example, are inequitable. When all types of work are accounted for, men have one-half hour per day more of free time than women have (Sayer, 2005). Even if men and women had equal amounts of work and leisure time, the experience of this time would not be the same. Women's time allocations, both at work and in leisure, are subject to more interruptions than men's time allocations are, and women are more likely than men to have to combine instrumental tasks and leisure activities (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). These inherent inequities in men's and women's leisure time likely make the moderating effect of perceived marital unfairness more salient for women than for men.

### Method

#### Sample

The data for this study came from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). The first wave of the NSFH took place in 1987 and was designed specifically to study U.S. family structure and process. The sample was obtained through a "multi-stage area probability sample" (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988, pg. 19), and oversampled many minority groups. Because of the sampling techniques, the NSFH is nationally representative. The NSFH is also longitudinal – the second wave was conducted between 1992 and 1994 with most interviews being conducted in 1992 and 1993. One useful feature of the NSFH that is often lacking in other nationally-representative data is that the researchers generally interviewed both

the participants and their spouses in married couple households.

Of 13,007 individuals that participated in Wave 1 (W1), 5,632 were married and had a spouse participate. Of these couples, 3,861 remained married and participated in the follow up survey in 1992 (W2). These 3,861 couples are the participants in the present study.

At W1, the population was representative of U.S. married couples. However, because of the attrition between W1 and W2, the sample became somewhat more select over time. Some of the couples left the sample because of divorce. These couples were less satisfied with their marriages in W1 and spent less time together. Couples that were lost to follow-up had no marital differences than the couples that stayed in the sample. However, these couples were less educated and had lower income than the couples that remained in the sample. Implications for attrition due to divorce is discussed in the discussion section.

A number of factors drove the decision to use the NSFH. First, the NSFH was one of the few nationally representative longitudinal studies to simultaneously assess reports of spouses' time alone together, subjective evaluations of that time, and marital satisfaction. Although many of the time-diary data sets measure time spent alone together, they rarely survey participants' feelings about that time *and* their marital quality. A second advantage of the NSFH was that it surveyed both husbands and wives. This allowed a gendered analysis without an appreciable loss of statistical power.

### Measures

A single item measured marital satisfaction. This item asked participants how happy they were with their marriage. Responses ranged from 1 (Very Unhappy) to 7 (Very Happy).

Although a multi-item scale would have been more desirable, one was not included until W2. In order to run the time together by W1 marital satisfaction interaction, this study needed the same

measure in both waves. Both W1 marital satisfaction and W2 marital satisfaction were used in the analyses.

Frequency of spousal time was measured using an item that asked participants how frequently they spent time alone with their spouse in the past month. The range of responses was from 1 (Never) to 7 (Almost Every Day). Only W1 frequency of time together was used in the analyses.

An item that asked participants how happy they were with the amount of time that they spent with their spouse measured satisfaction with amount of time together. Participants could answer 1 (Very Unhappy) to 7 (Very Happy). This item was added to the NSFH in W2. Individuals' proportion of free time spent with spouse assessed the percentage of each participant's free time that they spent with their spouse. The response set ranged from 1 (Almost None) to 5 (Almost All). To evaluate whether the relationship between the proportion of spouses free time and satisfaction with the amount of time together attenuates at higher values, a squared term of proportion of time together was also created. Like satisfaction with time together, this item was introduced in the second wave of the NSFH.

Perceived marital unfairness was a summed scale constructed from three items in W1. Each item asked how unfair the participant's marriage was in different domains (household chores, working for pay, and spending money). The items were reverse coded so that a high score represented high marital unfairness to self. Since distributive justice posits that unfairness to self is what changes attitudes and behaviors, all responses that indicated unfairness to one's spouse were set to 0. Consequently, if one spouse perceived unfairness to the other, it was treated methodologically the same as if no unfairness existed. The perceived marital unfairness to oneself scale had an alpha of .80 for women and .90 for men.



Finally, the control covariates were age, marital number, marital duration, education and income. Age was the participant's age in years. Marital number assessed the number of times each spouse had been married. Marital duration measured how long the couples' current marriage had lasted in years. Education was the number of completed years of schooling. Income was each family's total income. All of the control covariates were assessed at W1.

Some of the participants had one or more variables missing in the data set. Missing responses ranged from 0 – 15%. Most variables had 5% or less missing. Rather than discard these couples, multiple imputation techniques were used to generate possible values of missing responses.

### Analyses

The two analyses relied on a series of hierarchical regressions. The first analysis was primarily concerned with replicating former findings and then testing whether satisfaction with the amount of time together served as a mediating variable between the frequency of time together and marital satisfaction. The first model of the first analysis attempted to replicate prior findings on the relationship between frequency of time spent alone together and future marital satisfaction by regressing W2 marital satisfaction on W1 frequency of time alone together and the control covariates. In the second model, W1 marital satisfaction and an interactive term between the frequency of time alone together and W1 marital satisfaction was added. Finally, W2 satisfaction with the amount of time together was added in the third model to see if it mediated the relationship between the frequency of time together and marital satisfaction.

The second analysis examined predictors of spouses' satisfaction with the amount of time spent together. In the first model, W2 satisfaction with time together was regressed on W1 frequency of time together. In the second model W1 marital satisfaction, the W2 proportion of

free time spent with one's spouse, and W1 perceived marital unfairness were added. In the third model, the two interactions (frequency of time together by perceived marital unfairness and proportion of free time together by perceived marital unfairness) were added.

If either analysis had statistically significant interaction or curvilinear effects then predicted values were generated and plotted. To generate predicted values for interaction effects, values of the interacting variables that were one standard deviation above and below the mean were entered into the regression equation while holding other statistically significant variables at their means. These predicted values were then plotted to demonstrate the interaction effect. Curvilinear effects were plotted by entering the linear and squared value of the significant variable into the regression equation and holding other statistically significant values at their means.

Since gender was likely to moderate the results of both analyses, separate analyses for men and women were conducted.

## Results

### Descriptive Results

Because this sample was derived from a national survey, spouses' demographic characteristics were heterogeneous. For example, participants ranged in age from 18 to 97 years old with the mean age in the early 40's. The mean number of marriages was 1.25 indicating that most of the couples were on their first marriage, and the mean length of marriage was about 16.5 years. Participant's average level of education was having one year of training beyond high school, and the median income was \$32,500.

Descriptive results showed that most spouses were quite happy in their marriages. Both husbands and wives reported high levels of marital satisfaction, frequency of spousal time, and

satisfaction with the amount of spousal time (see Table 3.1). Further, perceived unfairness was low and the proportion of spouses' free time that they spent with each other was moderately high.

#### Multivariate Analysis of Frequency of Time Together and Future Marital Satisfaction

The hierarchical OLS regressions supported expectations. In line with previously published studies, the frequency of spousal time at Wave 1 positively predicted their marital satisfaction at Wave 2 (see Table 3.2, Model 1). In Model 2, adding marital satisfaction and the frequency of spousal time by marital satisfaction interaction halved the size of the coefficients and doubled the variance explained. As expected, the marital time by satisfaction interaction differed by gender; the interaction was significant only for women. The nature of the interaction, however, was opposite to the expectations. Spending time alone together was expected to enhance future marital satisfaction only if current marital satisfaction was high. The data showed, however, that frequent spousal time at Wave 1 helped enhance wives' future marriage satisfaction at Wave 2 regardless of Wave 1 marital satisfaction (see Figure 3.1).

Adding satisfaction with the amount of time together (Model 3) reduced the relationship between frequency of spousal time and future marital satisfaction to zero for both wives and husbands. Further, the variance explained more than doubled by adding this one variable. These findings supported the expected relationship between frequency of spousal time, satisfaction with the amount of time together, and marital satisfaction – satisfaction with the amount of time spent together mediated the relationship between the frequency of time spent together and marital satisfaction.

Age and marital duration significantly predicted future marital satisfaction. Age, but not marital duration, also positively predicted spouses' satisfaction with the amount of time they

spent together. However, conducting the analyses separately by age groups (analysis not shown) showed that the model operated the same across age groups. That is, in every age group frequency of time alone together positively predicted marital satisfaction, and satisfaction with the amount of time together completely mediated this relationship. Consequently, the model does not differ by age. The models shown in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 also likely do not differ by other variables that are strongly correlated with age such as marital duration, or number of children. If having young children at home influenced the relationship between spousal time and marital satisfaction, for example, then differences between the age group with the highest proportion of young families and the other age-groups should have emerged. Such differences were not found in the data.

#### Predictors of Satisfaction with Amount of Spousal Time

As anticipated, frequency of spousal time at Wave 1 positively predicted W2 satisfaction with the amount of time together (see Table 3.3, Model 1). Adding Wave 1 marital satisfaction, W1 perceived marital unfairness and Wave 2 proportion of free time together halved the coefficient for frequency of time together and doubled the variance explained (see Table 3.3, Model 2). Frequency of spousal time continued to positively predict spouses' satisfaction with the amount of time spent together. Perceived marital unfairness negatively predicted wives' satisfaction with amount of time spent with their husbands, but such a relationship did not emerge for husbands. Finally, although proportion of available time spent with spouse was the strongest predictor of satisfaction with time together, this was qualified by a statistically significant polynomial term.

To understand the curvilinear relationship between proportion of free time spent with spouse and satisfaction with the amount of time together, values of the proportion of free time

spent with spouse were entered into the regression equation and plotted (see Figure 3.2). The relationship was expected to be positive and attenuate at higher values of time together.

Unexpectedly, the curvilinear relationship between free time together and satisfaction with time was negative. Thus, for both spouses the higher proportion of their available time spent together, the more spouses were dissatisfied with the amount of time spent together (see Figure 3.2).

Turning closer attention to perceptions of unfairness yielded two significant interactions. The interaction of frequency of spousal time and perceptions of unfairness, and the interaction of proportion of free time together and perceptions of unfairness predicted wives' satisfaction with the amount of spousal time (Table 3.3, Model 3). The magnitudes of the interaction coefficients were equal, but the signs were opposing. When wives perceived unfairness in their marriage, their satisfaction with the amount of spousal time stayed at the same level whether they frequently spent time together or infrequently spent time together (see Figure 3.3). When wives perceived little unfairness in the marriage, however, frequent spousal time was associated with higher levels of satisfaction with the amount of time together. The proportion of free time together by unfairness interaction meant that at high levels of proportion of free time together, unfairness was less related to satisfaction with time together than at low levels of proportion of free time together (see Figure 3.4). The interaction between the curvilinear effect of proportion of time together and unfairness (not shown) was not significant.

## Discussion

In an effort to understand the marital implications of declines in spousal time, this study examined the mechanisms behind the relationship between the frequency of spousal time and future marital satisfaction. It also assessed the predictors of spouses' satisfaction with the amount of time they spend together. Spouses' satisfaction with the amount of spousal time

completely mediated the relationship between spouses' frequency of spousal time and their future marital satisfaction. Predictors of spouses' satisfaction with the amount of time together include the frequency of spousal time, marital satisfaction, the proportion of free time that each spouse uses to spend time together and, for wives, perceived marital unfairness.

These findings indicate that declines in spousal time over the past thirty years have likely only weakly and indirectly influenced marital satisfaction because the frequency of spousal time does not directly relate to future marital satisfaction. For both wives and husbands, the relationship between their future marital satisfaction and the frequency of spousal time is completely mediated by their satisfaction with the amount of spousal time. Further, frequency of spousal time only weakly predicts spouses' satisfaction with the amount of spousal time. By comparison, the relationship between the proportion of free time spent together and satisfaction with the amount of time together was quite large. Taken together, these findings indicate that historical declines in spousal time have probably not altered marital satisfaction much. Rather, these findings indicate that the happiest couples balance the many demands on their time with spending their available time with their spouse.

These findings do not negate the marital value of spending time together. When spouses frequently spend time together, they indirectly enhance their marital satisfaction. Frequency of spousal time does predict spouses' satisfaction with the amount of time together. This variable is not the strongest predictor of satisfaction, though, and if frequently spending time together requires couples to use most of their available time in order to be together, then spouses may become dissatisfied.

Spending time together also seems particularly important for wives. Although satisfaction with the amount of time together mediated the association between spousal time and

future marital satisfaction, wives still benefit when they frequently spend time with their husbands. In the predictions of future marital satisfaction, if wives frequently spent time with their husbands, then their future marital satisfaction was high regardless of whether they started with a satisfying or dissatisfying marriage. Further, this interaction did not disappear with the addition of wives' satisfaction with the amount of time they spent together with their husbands. Because this interaction did not exist for husbands, these findings support other studies that have shown that spouses' time together may benefit wives more than husbands (Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Larson & Richards, 1994; Gager & Sanchez, 2003).

An additional gender difference is that perceived marital unfairness moderates the relationship between the frequency of spousal time and satisfaction with the amount of spousal time for wives, but not for husbands. Plotting the interaction shows that if wives feel that the marriage is unfair toward them, frequent spousal time does not relate to increased satisfaction with time together. When wives feel that their marriage is unfair, frequent spousal time likely exacerbates their awareness of their marital inequality. These feelings of inequality may thus negate the otherwise positive benefits that wives gain with frequent spousal time.

Perceived marital unfairness also moderated the relationship between the proportion of free time that spouses spent together and their satisfaction with their amount of time together. Interestingly though, the interaction was opposite that of perceived unfairness and frequency of time together. That is, at higher proportions of free time spent together, perceived marital unfairness seemed to matter less to spouses in their evaluation of the adequacy of their spousal time.

Taken together, all these findings demonstrate the power of couples' subjective evaluations of their marriage and of their spousal time. Couples evaluate whether the amount of

time they spend together is adequate. If they feel that it is adequate, they will be satisfied with their marriage regardless of the actual amount of time they spend together. Further, these evaluations of adequacy of spousal time are predicted more by the relative proportion of their own available time they are devoting to their spouse, rather than the objective amount of time they are actually spending with their spouse.

Because it was a relative amount of time together (e.g., using half of their free time to be with their spouse), rather than an objective amount (e.g., spending time alone together nearly everyday), that best predicted satisfaction with the amount of spousal time, spouses are aware of the other demands on their time. The idea that spouses adjust their expectations about spousal time according to the different demands on their time is supported by the finding that the relationship between proportions of available time spent together and satisfaction with the amount of time spent together declined at higher proportions of time together. The more spouses spend their available time exclusively on their marriage, the less satisfied they were with the amount of time they spent with their spouse. Thus, spouses desire to spend time with their spouse, but not to the exclusion of personal interests.

This study has limitations. Unfortunately, satisfaction with the amount of time spent with ones spouse was only included in W2 of the NSFH. Consequently, some of its ability to mediate the relationship between the frequency of spousal time and future marital satisfaction may come from being measured at the same time as “future” marital satisfaction rather than any theoretical association. To examine the extent of this possibility, a model was run (not shown) where Wave 2 frequency of spousal time predicted W2 marital satisfaction to see if W2 satisfaction with the amount of time together could still able mediate the relationship. Like the original results, adding satisfaction with the amount of time together halves the size of the frequency of time



together coefficient and doubles the amount of marital satisfaction variance explained. However, spousal time still remained statistically significant.

Part of the reason that it may have remained statistically significant is that in the original test, the moderating effect of marital satisfaction was tested first. In the first analysis (see Table 3.2, Model 2) this interaction also halved the coefficient of time together and doubled the amount of variance explained. Unfortunately, the latter test using W2 frequency of spousal time could not include a spousal time by marital satisfaction interaction, so the tests are not exactly equivalent. These tests show that much of the relationship between spouses' frequency of time alone together and marital satisfaction is due to how satisfied they are with the amount of time they spend together. Some of the ability of satisfaction with amount of time together to act as a mediator, though, may be due to the fact that satisfaction with time together was collected at W2 and that frequency of time together was measured at W1.

The second limitation is that of attrition. Some couples might be missing at random, while other couples were not in this sample because they divorced between W1 and W2. Those who left the sample due to divorce may have been different from couples that remained in the sample. The omission of the couples that divorced between waves 1 and 2 may bias the findings.

An attrition analysis (not shown) shows that couples who divorced between W1 and W2 were less satisfied in their marriages, had less frequent spousal time, and felt their marriages were more unfair than couples that were in the sample. These marital differences were usually around .20 of a standard deviation lower for divorced couples than for couples that were in the sample. Spouses who went on to divorce were thus unhappy in their marriages and did not spend as much time together as couples that did not divorce. If divorced couples were also dissatisfied with the amount of time they spent together, then attrition may not be a problem. In this case,

not having the divorced couples underestimates the relationship between time together, satisfaction with time, and marital satisfaction. Conversely, if the divorced couples were satisfied with infrequent spousal time, a not unreasonable assumption for these unhappily married couples, then not having them may bias the mediating power of this variable upward. Unfortunately, couples' satisfaction with time could not be evaluated prior to their divorce because this variable was not in W1. Consequently, the effects of this differential attrition on the results are unknown and indicate that the findings need to be interpreted cautiously.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to knowledge on how spousal time is linked to marital satisfaction by investigating the mechanisms that link these two factors. It also uncovered some questions that are worth following up in future research. First, family scholars could expand knowledge of the different types of subjective evaluations that spouses could make about their time together. To this point, the only other subjective evaluation beyond satisfaction with the amount of time that has been investigated is how much spouses enjoy the specific activities they do together (Crawford et al.). Other possibilities include whether spouses think their time together was well spent, and whether spouses agreed on the nature of the time they spent together. Knowing the different criteria that spouses use to evaluate spousal time might help scholars to better understand how spouses' time allocation influences marriage.

A further question is whether spouses have to be alone when they spend time together to enhance their marital satisfaction. Social norms surrounding parenting have changed, such that intensive parenting by both men and women is valued (Coltrane, 1996; Daly, 2001; Stearns, 2003). It may be that parents can spend time together with each other in the company of their children and experience enhanced marital satisfaction – especially if spouses expect joint parenting and family activities. The idea that spending time with one's spouse at the same time

as spending time with children might enhance marital satisfaction, however, has not been advanced in the literature.

Finally, future research should also continue investigating gendered experiences of time. Like gender, time is a social construct that is taken for granted. That these two social constructs interact is fascinating. Scholars should continue exploring the ways that gender structures individuals' experience of time and how those experiences relate to experiences in relationships.

In conclusion, this study has shown that despite declines in spousal time, couples remain satisfied with the amounts of time they spend together and consequently are satisfied with their marriage. Contemporary spouses seem to be aware of the many demands on their time and adjust their marital expectations accordingly. By expecting to spend a certain amount of their free time together rather than expectation a set amount of spousal time, busy couples are able to maintain their marital satisfaction. Contemporary married couples are thus resilient to the demands placed on their time by social changes.

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Table 3.1

## Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Wives			Husbands		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Marital Satisfaction (W2)	5.89	1.33	1 – 7	5.91	1.26	1 – 7
Frequency of Time Alone Together (W1)	4.96	1.40	1 – 6	4.90	1.37	1 – 6
Marital Satisfaction (W1)	6.14	1.17	1 – 7	6.17	1.14	1 – 7
Satisfaction with Amount of Time Together (W2)	5.10	1.67	1 – 7	5.16	1.56	1 – 7
Proportion of Free Time Together (W2)	3.55	1.29	1 – 5	3.69	1.18	1 – 5
Perceived Marital Unfairness (W1)	.54	.93	0 – 6	.20	.62	0 – 6
Age	40.85	14.04	18 – 97	43.32	14.42	19 – 89
Marital Number	1.23	.49	1 – 5	1.25	.54	1 – 5
Education	12.83	2.66	0 – 20	12.99	3.10	0 – 20
	Couple Variables					
	M		SD		Range	
Marital Duration	16.44		14.11		0 – 63	
Income	32,500 <sup>a</sup>		43,560.02		0 – 982,000	

<sup>a</sup> Sample Median

Table 3.2

## Multivariate Models of Wives' and Husbands' Future Marital Satisfaction

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<u>Wives</u>	<u>Husbands</u>	<u>Wives</u>	<u>Husbands</u>	<u>Wives</u>	<u>Husbands</u>
Intercept	6.18***	6.00***	5.95***	5.93***	4.32***	4.56***
Frequency of Time Alone Together (W1)	.19*** (.20)	.14*** (.15)	.08*** (.08)	.08*** (.08)	.01 (.01)	.02 (.02)
Marital Satisfaction (W1)			.38*** (.34)	.25*** (.23)	.28*** (.25)	.19*** (.18)
Time Alone Together by Marital Satisfaction Interaction			-.03* (-.04)	-.01 (-.02)	-.03* (-.03)	-.01 (-.02)
Satisfaction with Amount of Time Together (W2)					.36*** (.45)	.32*** (.40)
Age	-.01* (-.10)	.001 (.01)	-.01 (-.07)	.002 (.02)	-.02*** (-.18)	-.01** (-.12)
Marital Number	.10 (.04)	.05 (.02)	.10 (.04)	.04 (.05)	.11* (.04)	.08 (.03)
Marital Duration	.01*** (.14)	.008* (.09)	.01*** (.14)	.007* (.08)	.01*** (.12)	.009** (.10)
Education	-.02** (-.04)	-.02** (-.06)	-.02* (-.03)	-.02** (-.05)	-.01 (-.01)	-.008 (-.02)
Income	.004 (.004)	-.005 (-.005)	.02 (.02)	-.004 (-.004)	.01 (.01)	-.005 (-.004)
R-Square	.05	.04	.15	.09	.32	.22

Note. Regression Coefficients (Standardized Coefficients)

Table 3.3

## Multivariate Predictors of Wives' and Husbands' Satisfaction with Amount of Time Together

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands
Intercept	4.67***	4.28***	4.99***	4.47***	4.98***	4.48**
Frequency of Time Alone Together (W1)	.26***	.21***	.09***	.10***	.09***	.10***
	(.22)	(.19)	(.07)	(.09)	(.08)	(.09)
Marital Satisfaction (W1)			.16***	.14***	.17***	.14***
			(.11)	(.11)	(.12)	(.11)
Proportion of Free Time Spent Together (W2)			.51***	.37***	.51***	.37***
			(.39)	(.28)	(.39)	(.28)
Proportion of Free Time Squared (W2)			-.14***	-.10***	-.13***	-.10***
			(-.13)	(-.09)	(-.13)	(-.09)
Perceived Marital Unfairness (W1)			-.10***	-.02	-.12***	-.04
			(-.06)	(-.01)	(-.07)	(-.01)
Frequency of Time Together by Unfairness Int.					-.05**	-.02
					(-.05)	(-.01)
Proportion of Free Time Together by Unfairness Int.					.03*	-.02
					(.03)	(-.01)
Age	.03***	.04***	.02***	.03***	.01***	.03***
	(.22)	(.34)	(.13)	(.28)	(.13)	(.29)
Marital Number	-.06	-.11*	-.06	-.12*	-.06	-.12*
	(-.02)	(-.04)	(-.02)	(-.04)	(-.02)	(-.04)
Marital Duration	.003	-.005	.003	-.004	.004	-.004
	(.03)	(-.04)	(.03)	(-.04)	(.03)	(-.04)
Education	-.05***	-.04***	-.02	-.02*	-.02*	-.02*
	(-.08)	(-.08)	(-.03)	(-.05)	(-.03)	(-.05)
Income	-.002	.0006	-.005	-.0008	-.004	-.001
	(-.001)	(.0004)	(-.004)	(-.0006)	(-.003)	(-.0009)
R-Square	.14	.17	.36	.29	.36	.29

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

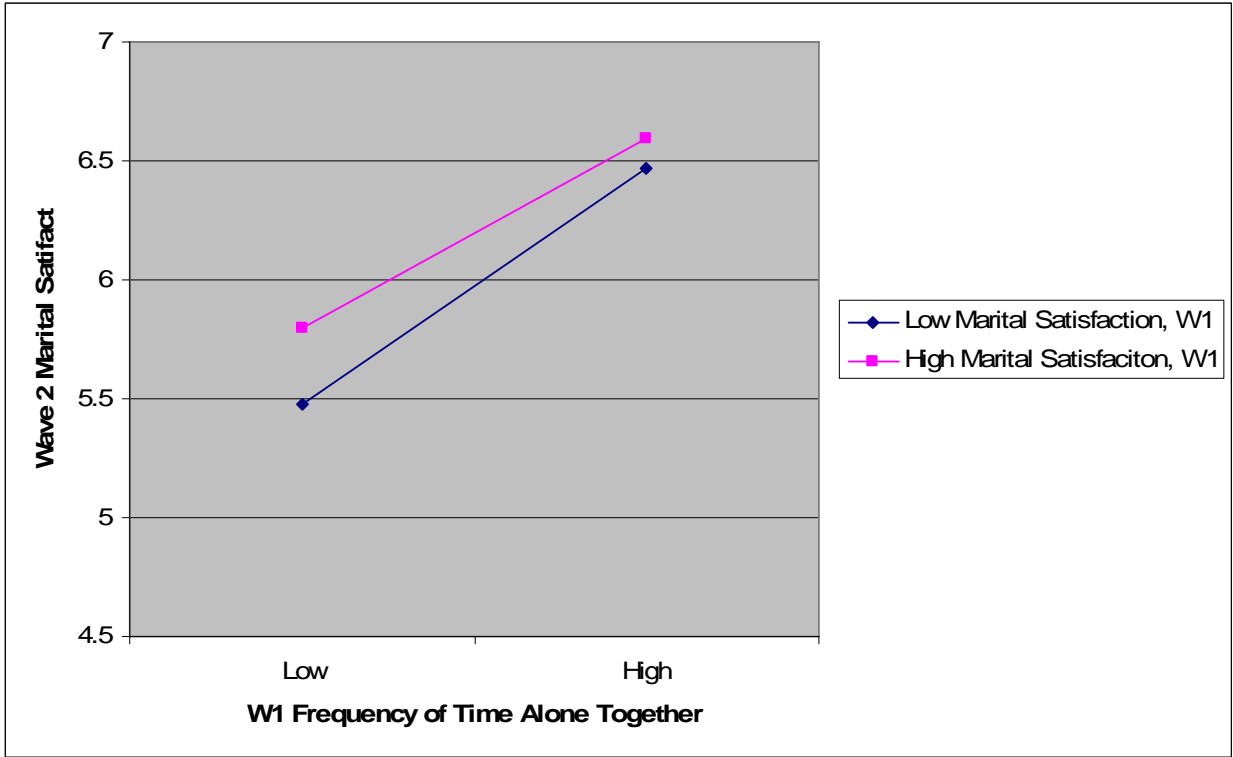


Figure 3.1  
Predictions of Wives' Wave 2 Marital Satisfaction based on the Interaction between W1  
Frequency of Time Together and W1 Marital Satisfaction.

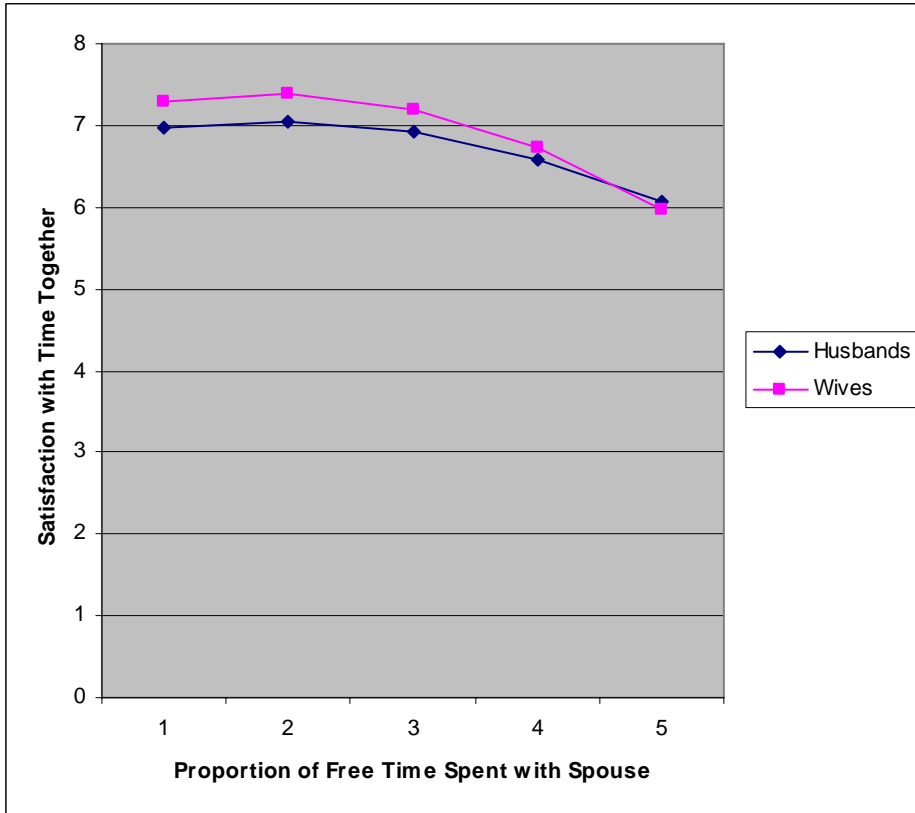


Figure 3.2

Curvilinear Relationship between Participants' Satisfaction with the Amount of Time they Spent with their Spouse by Proportion of Free Time Spent with Spouse.

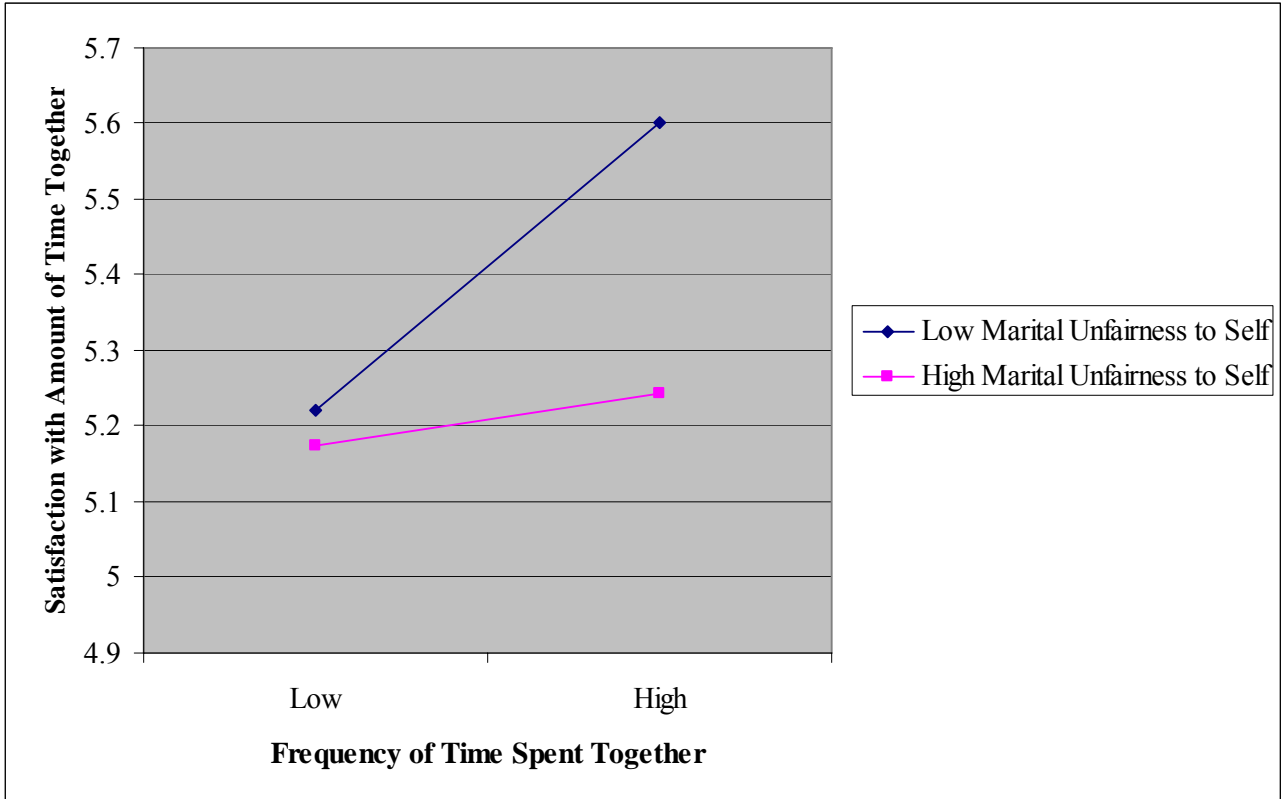


Figure 3.3

Predicted Values of Wives' Satisfaction with the Amount of Time they Spent with their Husbands by the Frequency of Time Spent with Their Husband and Perceived Marital Unfairness.

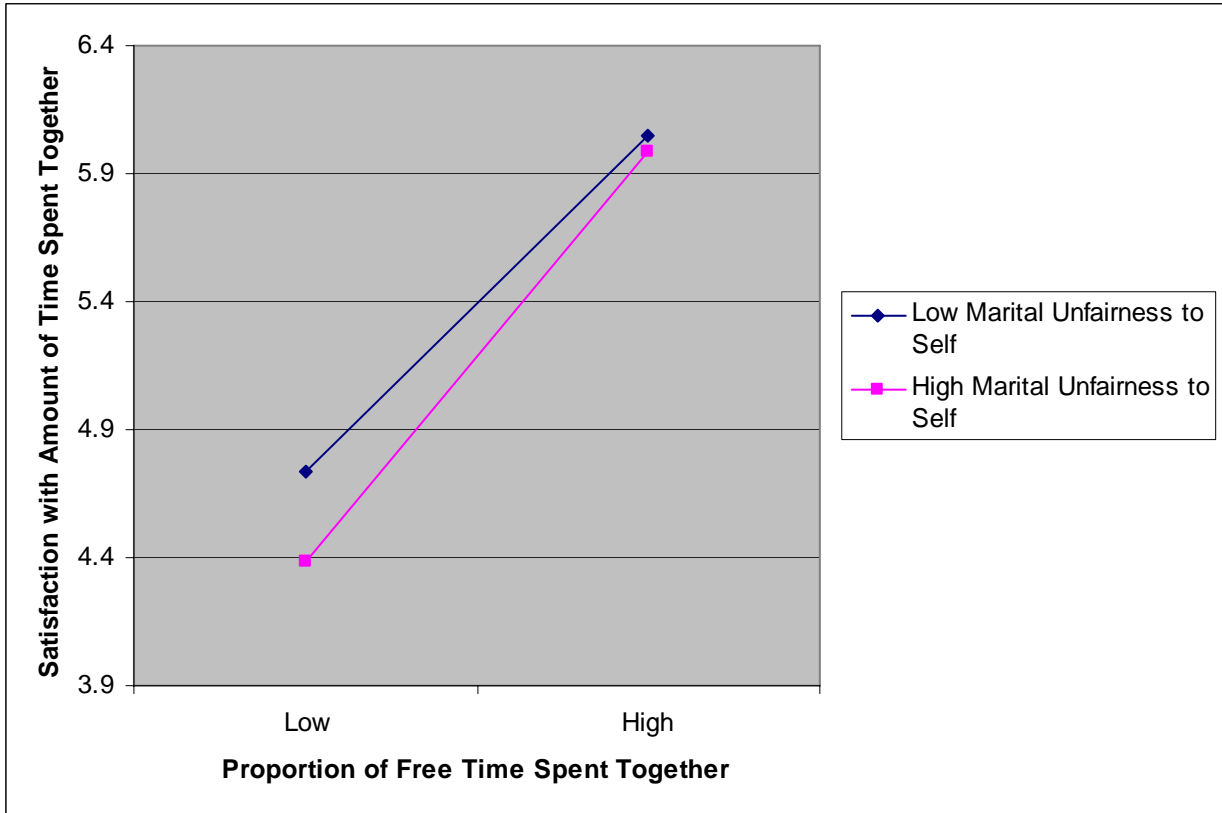


Figure 3.4

Predicted Values of Wives' Satisfaction with the Amount of Time they Spent with their Husbands by the Proportion of Free Time Spent with Their Husband and Perceived Marital Unfairness.

## Chapter 4

### The Gendered Meanings of Family Time for Marriage



## Abstract

Qualitative studies indicate that, for parents, family time often has negative aspects. Despite these findings, research has not examined the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction. Analyses using data from the National Survey of Families and Households (n = 2,081 couples) showed that family time positively, instead of negatively, predicts marital satisfaction. Mothers' relationship with their children completely mediates the association between family time and marital satisfaction. Fathers' relationship with their children moderates this association. Although the direction of the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction remains unclear, this study shows that they positively, rather than negatively relate. Consequently, despite the negative aspects of family time that qualitative research has identified, family time does not detract from parents' marriages.

The marital dyad often exists in a family system that includes children. Thus, spouses have to determine how much time they will devote to each other exclusively, and how much time they will spend with their children. Recent qualitative descriptions of “family time<sup>2</sup>”, do not present it as very desirable, though. These descriptions note that family time is spent in the service of children, that parents feel guilt-ridden for not providing enough of it, and that it often does not meet parents’ expectations (Daly, 2001). Despite this, parents desire more of it, and often sacrifice personal and spousal time to create family time (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Simon, 1995).

Perhaps not surprisingly, nationally representative time diary data shows that family time has increased over the past 30 – 40 years, while time that spouses spend alone together (spousal time) has declined (Bianchi et al., 2006; Dew, 2007b; Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). Thus, married parents have less spousal time, but more family time. With all of the negative descriptions of family time, though, do spouses experience family time as a marital problem? Might family time be a barrier to positive marital relations? Although family time may detract from marriage (Simon, 1995), the meaning of family time for couples’ marriages is probably more complex than just being a negative predictor. This study uses longitudinal data from the National Survey of Families and Households (N = 2,081 couples), to examine these questions.

#### Time, Family Roles, and Meaning

By itself, time is meaningless. Individuals imbue time with meaning as they use it to engage in activity, interact with others, and evaluate their experiences (Dew, 2007a; Fenstermaker, 1996; Roy, Tubbs, & Burton, 2004). For example, “thirty minutes” does not mean much. However, when a parent spends thirty minutes engaged in a leisure activity with

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<sup>2</sup> To avoid confusion and unnecessary text, and to stay in line with the limitations of the data, this study uses the term “family time” to describe the time a parent spends one-on-one with a child, the time a parent spends with multiple children, and the time that the whole family spends together.

their adolescent child, time becomes meaningful. Further, individuals' experience of time and the meaning they derive from it depends on their cultural contexts, social roles, and gender (Daly, 1996; Marks, 1977; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003; Roxburgh, 2006).

Because people actively construct their experience of time, this study uses symbolic interactionism to understand the relationships between family time and marital satisfaction. Symbolic interactionism is useful for this study because it is one of the few theories to delineate how individuals derive meaning from their experiences. Further, by focusing on the creation of meaning and understanding, symbolic interactionism is sensitive to the interactions between different social constructs such as time, gender, and family. For these reasons, many scholars researching time in family life have used symbolic interactionism (e.g., Daly, 2001).

Symbolic interactionism asserts that people give meaning to different aspects of their lives through interacting with others (Blumer, 1969). Key to this process is individuals interpreting their interactions. Thus, in this study, spouses find meaning for their marriage in the time they spend interacting with family members. Depending on the interpretation of these interactions, family time may positively or negatively relate to marital satisfaction.

Culture influences the way that individuals act toward, experience, and interpret time (Marks, 1977; Zerubavel, 1981). In contemporary American culture, time is linear, divisible, and finite (Daly, 1996; Zerubavel). Although most Western societies view time this way, American culture also views time as an ultra-scarce commodity (Hochschild, 2005; Robinson & Godbey, 1999; Roxburgh, 2006). Because society values some activities over others (Marks, 1977), time must be used wisely, otherwise it becomes "wasted". Regarding relationships with others, then, time is a resource that can be used to build and maintain family relationships (Larson & Richards, 1994). Married couples use spousal time to affirm their sense of being a

couple (Kingston & Nock, 1987).

Socially normative expectations make experiences and interpretations of time inseparable from gender. For example, because society still expects mothers to be more heavily involved in child-rearing than fathers (Garey, 1999; Williams, 2000), mothers are more likely than fathers to have to combine leisure and instrumental activities at home and are less likely to have long blocks of uninterrupted time (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). Further, women's economic power in different countries relates to cross-national differences in the amount of time that fathers spend in childcare (Hook, 2006). Spouses' time allocation in the family is thus an area where gendered power differences emerge (Daly, 1996). Interestingly, even though husbands seem to have more control over their individual schedules, wives control the family time schedule (Daly, 2002).

More gender differences emerge when husbands and wives are asked what they want to change about the time they have. Although wives and husbands report that parenthood is their most salient role (Thoits, 1992), when aspects of spousal time and family time are considered, wives and husbands differ on what they desire. Husbands report wanting more time to spend with their wives and children, but wives reported wanting the time they spend with their husbands and their children to be of higher quality (Roxburgh, 2006). Thus, gender likely influences how individuals construct the meaning of family time and marriage.

Social class may also be important to how couples experience family time. The purpose of family time differs across social classes. For example, middle-class parents use family time to purposefully facilitate their children's growth by enrolling them in highly structured, skill-building activities (Lareau, 2002). Middle-class parents also spend a great deal of family time talking with their children and finding out about their lives. Contrastingly, in working class and

poor families, parents allow children to “naturally develop” and do not structure family time (Lareau). Working class and poor families use time together to relax and enjoy being together as a family, rather than focusing effort on enhancing childrens’ abilities (Lareau, 2000).

Resource differences between social classes may also differentiate the conditions of family time. The emotional stress that often accompanies poverty may overwhelm parents and make it more difficult for them to provide positive family time (Tubbs, Roy, & Burton, 2005). Further, couples with fewer resources may not be able to do what they want with their time. For example, families with lower income may not be able to afford to spend time together in certain activities, like long family vacations. Lower SES dual-earning couples may be forced to use a “split-shift” arrangement to cover their childcare needs, but working split shifts is associated with less spousal time (Kingston & Nock, 1987). Relatedly, because lower SES couples are less likely to have jobs that operate during “regular” business hours, they may have less time to spend with their children and spouse during morning and evening hours (Roy et al., 2004). Finally, the more control that individuals have over their work, the less they perceive a conflict between work-time and family time (Roxburgh, 2006). These differences have very little to do with race and more to do with class.

### Alternate Meanings of Family Time for Marriage

#### Family Time as a Marital Constraint

In a culture where most individuals feel that time to build relationships is rare, scholars have argued that time is the ultimate constraint on human activity (Juster & Stafford, 1985). Time spent in one activity cannot be spent in another activity. Although individuals attempt to “increase” the amount of time they have through time management and multitasking, only limited productivity increases can occur using these “time deepening” or “time stretching”

strategies (Robinson & Godbey, 1999) because the human attention span is limited.

Children lower the amount of time that spouses spend alone together. The transition to parenthood literature has demonstrated that on average having a child limits parents', especially mothers', freedom and roles (see Twenge, Campbell, and Foster, 2003 for a review). The spousal role often becomes more traditional, and spouses lose considerable time together (Aldous, 1990; White, Booth, & Edwards, 1986). In a recent analysis, for example, married couples with minors at home spent nearly one hour and fifteen minutes less alone daily together than married couples without minors in the home (Dew, 2007b). Loss of freedom, role limitation, and less companionship with ones' spouse all relate to lower marital satisfaction (Twenge et al., 2003).

Parents may be more or less likely to view family time as a marital constraint depending on the age of their children. Although some studies show that children reduce parents' time together regardless of their age (Houseknecht, 1979; Kurdek, 1993), no longitudinal studies exist that show whether parents recoup spousal time as their children age. Infants demand a lot of their parents' time (Feldman, 1981). Another aspect of parenting infants is that infants' needs have to be met on the infants' time schedule, irrespective of parents' schedules. Thus, parents have to adjust their time schedules to match infants' schedules, which might further limit spousal time. Adolescents, on the other hand, spend less time with their parents and more time with their peers as they achieve more autonomy (Larson & Richards, 1994). Consequently, parents' relationship between family time and marital satisfaction might depend on the age of their children.

The number of children that parents have may also influence the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction. The more children that parents have, the more they have to

divide their resources – attention and time (Miller, 1976; White, 1983). Consequently, parents with more children may experience family time differently than parents with fewer children. For parents with many children, family time may be more rushed and fragmented. They may not be able to have as many enjoyable one-on-one experiences with individual children. This potential for parents with many children to experience family time differently creates the potential for family time and number of children to interact and predict marital satisfaction.

In addition to lowering the amount of spousal time, qualitative studies have shown that family time is not very positive for parents. Through interviews, Daly (2001, pg. 291) found that parents felt that, “family time was more often an experience where you ‘tend to be crabby and short tempered with each other and you kind of go through it instead of play through it’”. Parents characterized family time as “exhausting” and “stressful”, and Daly (pg. 291) asserted that “whereas the ideology of family time suggests equal benefits for all family members, the data indicated that parents’ needs and satisfactions were secondary to an assessment of what was important for their children.” Other studies have found similar descriptions of family time (Simon, 1995).

Not only is family time stressful and carries few benefits for parents, it also interferes with couples’ time together. One wife noted, ““At this time in my life being a mother is number one and being a wife is number two... I think that causes problems ... It’s easier for me to say no to something he wants than it is for me to say no to something the kids want’” (Simon, 1995, pg. 188). Busy couples often found themselves giving up couple time to make room in their schedules for family time (Daly, 2001; Simon). Although these behaviors are historically normal, whether they pose a problem for contemporary marriage is unknown.

Consequently, married couples may experience family time as a constraint. Current

marital norms assert that marriage should contribute to the wellbeing and development of individual spouses (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Cherlin, 2004). Further, marital norms hold an extremely high standard of emotional intimacy for marriage (Glenn, 1996). If spouses are too emotionally and physically drained to nurture their marriage following work and family time, they may begin to see family time as a burden on their marriage.

Husbands may be more prone to experiencing family time as problematic. Husbands desire to spend larger quantities of time with their wives than they spend now (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Roxburgh, 2006). Thus, they may view family time as time they could be spending alone with their wives. Since wives control the family time schedule (Daly, 2002), if husbands feel that family time displaces couple time, they may interpret their lack of spousal time as their wives' valuing family time more than spousal time. They may in turn feel resentful.

Hypothesis 1: Family time negatively predicts marital satisfaction. This relationship is stronger for husbands than for wives.

#### Family Time as a Context for Building and Affirming Relationships

Directly opposing the constraint view is the idea that spouses perceive family time positively. Spouses may not experience being a husband or wife as an exclusive role; rather, they may feel more positively toward their marriage whenever they experience positive family interactions. That is, spouses likely consider more than just the interactions they have exclusively with each other when judging their marriage. They may also consider the interactions they have with their children or their whole family.

Parents desire to feel that their family is stable and emotionally close. They may gauge their family cohesion and solidarity on the frequency and quality of their family interactions. Family cohesion and solidarity are powerful motivators in this era of family instability, and



spending family time together allows families to affirm their relationships. That is, as families spend time together interacting, they send and receive the message that they are a loving, stable family (Crouter, Head, McHale, & Tucker, 2004; Hochschild, 2005; Larson & Richards, 1994). Because time allocation is a zero sum-game, and because time is such a valuable commodity, sacrificing individual and spousal time to create family time may powerfully affirm family ties in contemporary U.S. culture (Parkman, 2004). Parents not only desire to demonstrate family solidarity to themselves and others through interaction; they also desire that in the future their children will remember that the family was strong and loving. In Daly's (2001) qualitative study, one of the most common and explicit themes that arose was that parents wanted to provide their children with positive childhood memories about their family.

As they spend family time together, spouses demonstrate to each other that they desire to enhance family wellbeing. When one spouse sees the other spouse willingly sacrifice to help attain a goal that the first spouse has, this powerfully enhances the first spouse's feelings about the marriage (Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). It also demonstrates that the spouse who sacrificed wants the marriage to continue. Thus, engaging in family time should enhance spouses' marital satisfaction. A positive relationship between family time and marital quality received bivariate support in a convenience sample (Crouter et al., 2004).

Hypothesis 2: Family time positively predicts marital satisfaction.

Because men and women differ on their desires for time, the meaning of family time likely differs for husbands and wives. Women seek to use time to enhance the quality of their relationships rather than focusing on the quantity of time they spend with their children (Roxburgh, 2006). That is, they desire their family interactions to be more positive. Thus, for mothers, family time may be a means to an end – better relationships with their children. If

mothers find their family interactions to be positive, they may feel that their family is close and will be satisfied with their marriage. Mother-child closeness has been linked to marital satisfaction (Steinberg, 1987). Consequently, for wives, any relationship between family time and marital satisfaction will be explained by their relationship with their children or may even depend on their relationship with their children.

Husbands also value family time. For example, fathers want to give their children positive memories just as much as mothers do (Daly, 2001), fathers' rate their parental role as their most salient role just like mothers do (Thoits, 1992), and research has shown that father-son relationships predict marital satisfaction (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1987). However, fathers cite spending more time with their children as their ultimate parental goal, rather than improving their relationship with their children (Roxburgh, 2006). For fathers, simply spending more time with their children likely shows that they care about their family and want it to be stable. Thus, the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction will not be mediated or moderated by father-child relationships.

Hypothesis 3: Mothers', but not fathers', relationships with their children mediate or moderate the association between family time and marital satisfaction.

Social class may also moderate the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction for two reasons. The different purposes of family time differentiate the conditions of family time between classes, and may moderate the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction. Studies of middle-class family time describe it as a whirlwind of activity as families rush from one child-centered activity to another (Lareau, 2000; 2002). Middle-class parents communicate with their children as they are in transit and then watch their children as they participate in their activities. Even though mothers and fathers are often together at these

activities, they often do not communicate as a couple. Rather, mothers network with other mothers while fathers tend to use the time for personal concerns (Lareau, 2002). Contrastingly, family time in working class and poor families is much more relaxed and much less child-focused. Parents are not so concerned about teaching their children as they are concerned about just being together.

An example of how all of these factors might work together is television viewing. Working class and poor families do not have the resources to frequently spend family time outside the home. Thus, for these families, television is an inexpensive way to entertain the family and interact together (Tubbs et al., 2005). In middle-class families, however, television viewing is something that brings about conflict. This conflict is often resolved by having multiple televisions to allow each individual to view their own program (Rideout & Hamel, 2006). Consequently, in middle-class families, television viewing is an isolating experience. Even the meaning of television differs across classes. Lower-class parents view television as an acceptable, even beneficial, activity, whereas middle-class parents see their children's television viewing as harmful and as interfering with other activities (Lareau, 2002; Tubbs et al., 2005).

Translating these differences into predictions of how class moderates the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction is difficult. On the one hand, family time in working class and poor families seems more conducive to spouses' interactions as it is more relaxed and less child focused. On the other hand, working class and poor families may have less family time and parents may be more emotionally stressed during family time. Thus, although it is reasonable to hypothesize that class differences exist, it is difficult to make any predictions as to how class will moderate the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Social class moderates the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction.

#### Reverse Causal Possibilities

The direction of causality in the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction cannot be taken for granted. That is, unhappily married couples may not want to engage in family time as often as happily married couples do. Couples experiencing marital difficulties may not want to participate in family time because they may desire to avoid unpleasant personal experiences or may want to hide their marital difficulties from their children. Further, couples in dissatisfying relationships cannot be sure that maritally specific investments (such as engaging in family time) will last, if they suspect that the marriage might dissolve (Cherlin, 2004; Pollak, 1985). Conversely, satisfied spouses have many incentives to engage in family time, and can safely do so without worrying that their investment of time will be lost. A reverse causal model may be especially likely to occur for husbands. Prior work has shown that husbands in satisfying marriages interact with their children more and have higher quality of interactions than husbands in unsatisfying relationships (Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991; Volling & Belsky, 1991). Not surprisingly, couples' marital satisfaction positively predicts the amount of time they spend alone together (Larson & Richards, 1994; White, 1983; Zuo, 1992).

Hypothesis 5: Marital satisfaction positively predicts family time. This association is stronger for husbands than for wives.

### Method

#### Data and Sample

This study uses data from the first wave National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). The NSFH was designed to study a wide array of family issues in a nationally

representative sample (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988). Wave 1 (W1) of the NSFH was conducted in 1987 using a “multi-stage area probability sample” design. W1 included over 13,000 households, although individuals were the sampling unit. An interesting aspect of the NSFH is that the researchers interviewed married participants’ spouses as well as the participant.

Because the family time questions were only asked of parents with children at home who were at least 5 years-old, the sample is restricted to parents with children who are between 5- and 18-years old. Of the 13,000 households, 2,081 were married couples with children at home who were the specified age. For these couples, both spouses participated in the interview. This sample is representative of married couples who have at least one child who is five years old or older.

### Measures

Marital satisfaction was the dependent variable. Wives’ and husbands’ marital satisfaction was assessed at W1 by an item that asked participants how happy they were with their marriage “overall.” Spouses could respond that they were 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy) with their marriage. Although a multi-item or multidimensional scale of marital satisfaction would have been more reliable than a single item global scale, W1 of the NSFH did not use such a scale.

Family time was the main independent variable. It was a scale created by summing two variables that asked each parent 1) how often they spend time with their children in leisure activities away from home and 2) how frequently they spend time with their children working or playing at home together. Parents could respond from 1 (Never or almost never) to 6 (Almost everyday). The two variables have a Chronbach’s alpha of .65 for both wives and husbands. Unfortunately, this scale is not a “pure” measure of family time because it is unknown whether

parents thought about the time they spent together as a whole family when answering, or just thought about the time they spent alone with their children.

Another important independent variable was the frequency of spousal time. This variable was taken from an item in W1 and W2 that asked how often in the past month the participant did an activity alone with their spouse. The response set was 1 (Never) to 6 (Almost everyday).

Parents' relationship with their children is an average of items that asked each parent to rate their overall relationship with each child. The higher the rating was, the better the relationship that the parents had on average with their children.

Age, spouses' number of marriages, education, marital duration, income, joint work hours, and couples' number of children and adolescents were also in the analyses because they have been linked to marital satisfaction, spouses' time spent together, and the amount of time that parents spend with their children.

### Analyses

Hierarchical regression models (OLS) were used to analyze marital satisfaction. In the first model, W1 marital satisfaction was regressed onto spousal time, family time, and the control variables. In the second model, the parent-child relationship was added to see whether it acted as a mediator. Finally, a family time by parent-child relationship interaction term was added to determine whether the parent-child relationship was a moderator.

The possibility of a reverse causal relationship between marital satisfaction and family time was evaluated by regressing family time onto marital satisfaction, spousal time, and the control variables. Doing this tested whether marital satisfaction predicted the amount of family time that couples reported. Ostensibly, data from wave 2 (W2) of the NSFH could have been used to create change score analyses or cross-lagged regressions. These models could have shed

some light on whether changes in family time related to changes in marital satisfaction or vice-versa, or some of both. These approaches were not used for a variety of reasons. First, any analysis that used both waves of data at the same time would have had to leave out the couples that divorced between W1 and W2. Leaving out these couples would have led to biased results because the relationship between marital satisfaction, spousal time, and family time may be quite different for them than for couples with more stable marriages.

Further, using lagged-regression models would be analyzing the relationship between *changes* in marital satisfaction, spousal time, and family time. Change in these variables may be confounded with the aging of children and other developmental processes that may not have anything to do with the real relationship between family time and marriage. Additionally, analyzing change would not meet the main objective of the study. The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether family time, with all of its negative descriptions in the qualitative literature, harmed marital quality. Using cross-sectional data in no way interfered with this overarching purpose and may have strengthened the analysis because individuals that would not have been able to be included in a longitudinal analysis (e.g., couples that divorced between W1 and W2) were included in the cross-sectional analysis.

In all the analyses, husbands and wives were analyzed separately rather than including family time by gender interaction terms. This was done because both spouses were interviewed in the NSFH, so the data is clustered. Using clustered data often results in biased estimates. Further, using biased estimates usually increases the number of variables that are significant because the standard error is reduced considerably (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

The variables had between 0 and 13% missing with most variables having less than 1% of the responses missing. In order to include couples with one or more missing variables,

multiple imputation techniques were used. Using PROC MI in SAS, possible values of the missing data were estimated five times. Each of these five different datasets was then subjected to the OLS regression analyses. The software then statistically combined the five different regressions to obtain coefficients and standards of error.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

The sample was composed of couples with the mean age in the late 30's (see Table 4.1). Couples reported having an average of one child at home, and many couples had an adolescent. On average, both wives and husbands reported engaging in activities with their children between once per week and three times per week. Mothers and fathers had very positive relationships with their children. The average was above 6 on a scale of 7.

Descriptive statistics also showed that most wives and husbands were satisfied in their marriage. The average was 6 on a scale of 7. Thus, the outcome variable had restricted variance and may have proven problematic since there was not much variance to explain. This did not prove to be a problem, however. Frequency of spousal time was similar to family time frequency – spouses engaged in activities alone together one to three times per week.

### Multivariate Analyses

The multivariate analyses of marital satisfaction differed by gender. Contrary to Hypothesis 1 and consistent with Hypothesis 2, both family time and spousal time positively predicted wives' satisfaction with their marriage (see Table 4.2, Model 1). Only spousal time predicted marital satisfaction for husbands (see Table 4.3, Model 1). As expected in Hypothesis 3, mothers' relationship with their children completely mediated the association between the time they spent with their children and their marital satisfaction (see Table 4.2, Model 2). The



mother-child relationship did not moderate this association (see Table 4.2, Model 3). Further, social class did not appear to influence these relationships because the income by family time and education by family time interaction terms were not significant (not shown).

Even though husbands' reports of family time did not predict their marital satisfaction, the relationships that husbands have with their children were just as strong predictors of marital satisfaction as mothers' relationships were (Table 4.3, Model 2). Further, contrary to Hypothesis 3, the family time by child relationship interaction was significant for husbands. Thus, the meaning of family time depended on whether fathers had a good or poor relationship with their children. Holding other significant variables at their means and entering  $\pm 1$  standard deviation values of the interacting variables into the regression equation allowed the interaction to be graphed. The more time fathers spent with their children, the more marital satisfaction they reported, if they had good relationships with their children (see Figure 4.1). If fathers had poor relationships with their children, then spending more time with them was associated with lower marital satisfaction. Although father-child relationships were statistically significant moderators, the proxies for class were not (not shown).

Interestingly, the number of children and adolescents that parents had at home did not significantly predict marital satisfaction. These variables were insignificant for both husbands and wives. Additionally, interactions between family time and number of children, and family time and number of adolescents did not significantly predict marital satisfaction (not shown). Consequently, although the number and ages of children and adolescents are theoretically important to this study they were shown not to matter in the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction.

The reverse causal models with marital satisfaction predicting family time (not shown)

were substantively identical to the results in Tables 4.2 and 4.3. Marital satisfaction predicted wives' family time, and the mother-child relationship variable completely mediated the association. The ability for husbands' marital satisfaction to predict their family time depended on the father-child relationship variable and produced an interaction similar to Figure 1. Thus, regression analyses cannot settle the question of causal direction. A latent class analysis was also run to see if the latent variable that underlies the relationships between these variables could settle questions of directionality (see Appendix). Unfortunately, this was not the case.

### Discussion

This study used nationally representative, quantitative data to assess whether family time negatively or positively relates to marital satisfaction. The qualitative findings that have previously shown that family time is not very positive for parents and that parents sometimes favor family time over spousal time (Daly, 2001; Simon, 1995) motivated this study. This study is also important because parents are spending more time with their children than in the past, but less time with their spouses (Bianchi et al., 2006; Dew, 2007b; Sayer et al., 2004). Although qualitative studies have shown that family time may not be as positive as parents would like (Daly), this study found that family time positively predicted marital satisfaction.

As hypothesized, the meaning of family time differed for wives and husbands. For wives, family time was indirectly related to marital quality. Because the mother-child relationship completely explained the family time/marital satisfaction relationship, family time is likely a resource that mothers use to build relationships with their children. For husbands, however, the association between family time and marital satisfaction depended on the type of relationship that they had with their children. Although previous evidence indicated that the relationship between family time and marriage might have depended on social class, the analyses

did not support this assumption.

Although the analyses showed that family time was positively associated with marital satisfaction for wives and some husbands, the direction of this relationship is unclear. Reverse causal models (not shown) mirrored the first findings. That is, wives' marital satisfaction positively predicted mothers' reports of family time and their relationship with their children completely mediated this association. Further, the interaction between fathers' marital satisfaction and their relationship with their children significantly predicted family time.

Although the number of children and adolescents that parents had was thought to relate to marital satisfaction, this relationship was not found in the data. These findings run contrary to prior literature that has found that children decrease parents' spousal time and hurt their marriage. The reason this association may not have emerged was that spousal time was in the model and that number and ages of children in prior literature is just a proxy for the decreases in spousal time that children bring about. Alternatively, it may be that since the parents had to have a child that was at least five-years-old or older, then the number of couples with infants and toddlers was reduced. Having fewer couples with infants and toddlers might allow the number of children and adolescents to be unrelated to marital satisfaction.

This study has some limitations that temper the conclusions that can be drawn. First, the measure of family time was not very focused. The wording of the questions used in the family time scale did not specify whether "family time" included time spent alone with children or time spent with their children and their spouse. Thus, the family time scale likely measured both individual parent-child time and family time. Ideally, separate measures of the time that children spend just with their mother, just with their father, and with both their mother and father would exist (e.g., like Crouter et al.'s (2004) data).

Despite knowing the problems with the measure of family time, NSFH data was still used. The studies that have analyzed family time and marriage have used small convenience samples. Questions about the generalizability of the negative aspects of family time (Daly, 2001; Simon, 1995) and the positive relationship between family time and marriage remained (Crouter et al., 2004). The need to evaluate this question using nationally representative data to obtain generalizable findings outweighed the disadvantage of having a lower quality measure of family time.

Another limitation of this study is that it does not integrate the longitudinal nature of the data set. The reason that a cross-sectional wave of the NSFH was used was because of attrition, the dynamic nature of parenthood, and the possible changes in family time that occur. By W2, a not insignificant amount of parents of adolescents had “launched” their children. Thus, using W1 family time to predict W2 marital satisfaction would be misleading. Further, some couples present in W1 had divorced by W2. Not using those couples, who likely had the lowest marital satisfaction scores and family time, might have biased the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction. This study was unable to determine the direction of the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction; this task awaits future research. Without disentangling the reciprocal relationship between family time and marital satisfaction, little can be concluded about how families’ different interactions and interpretations shape the meaning of family and marital life.

Finally, questions of endogeneity persist. Although family time and marital satisfaction share a positive association, they may not really relate to each other. It is possible that a third variable accounts for this positive relationship. For example, couples’ marital satisfaction and family life may covary with their orientation toward family life. Individuals and couples that are

strongly oriented toward family life may spend more time together. These couples may also be more likely to feel that their marriage is satisfactory because either their pro-family orientation changes their behaviors or it changes their interpretations of their behaviors. Consequently, even though family time does not seem to harm marital satisfaction, the two variables may not actually relate. The robustness of the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction to endogeneity effects remains for future research.

Despite the limitations of this study, it raises questions that future research may be able to address. This study examined whether class moderated the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction. Other aspects of individuals' experience that may indicate culture, such as race and ethnicity, may also change how couples experience family time. In a qualitative study of newlywed couples, for example, African-American couples were more likely to talk about their goals for their relationship than white couples were; white couples were much more likely to emphasize career and achievement issues (Chadiha, Veroff, & Leber, 1998). These differences may have implications for the amount of time that these couples spend together.

Finally, this study raises some questions about qualitative studies' conclusions vis-à-vis family time. This study did not, nor could not, disprove the prior qualitative studies about the nature of family time. Rather, this study was concerned with the stressful implications of family time described in the qualitative literature. Because the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction was positive using data from a nationally representative data set, this study raises the question of whether some positive aspects of family time have been missed in the qualitative literature. Although Daly's (2001) study made an extremely important contribution to the literature by deconstructing romanticized notions of family time, there may be more positive aspects to family time than were found in that study. This warrants continued research

utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods.

In conclusion, contemporary married parents' time allocation strategies that emphasize family time more and spousal time less do not seem to be maritally problematic. To be sure, frequently spending time alone with one's spouse is a much stronger predictor of marital satisfaction than family time is. One could make the argument that even though family time positively relates to marital satisfaction, spouses would still be happier in their marriages if they reduced family time and increased spousal time. This argument does not receive support in the latent class analyses (see Appendix), though. Couples that were happiest (or saddest) in their marriages also had higher than average (or lower than average) family time. Thus, wives and husbands interpret their family interactions and spousal interactions separately such that both add to marital quality.

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Table 4.1

## Descriptive Statistics

Individual Variables	Wives			Husbands		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Marital Satisfaction	5.94	1.29	1 – 7	6.00	1.22	1 – 7
Time Alone with Spouse	4.51	1.54	1 – 6	4.41	1.51	1 – 6
Satisfaction with Time Alone	4.70	1.66	1 – 7	4.78	1.53	1 – 7
Wants more Time with Spouse	.61	.55	0 – 1	.66	.51	0 – 1
Family Time	7.99	2.41	2 – 12	7.34	2.38	2 – 12
Relationship with Children	6.27	.92	1 – 7	6.17	.96	1 – 7
Age	36.40	8.11	18 – 88	39.04	9.01	20 – 78
Number of Marriages	1.27	.53	1 – 4	1.28	.57	1 – 5
Education	12.70	2.54	0 – 20	12.99	2.95	0 – 20

Couple Variables	M	SD	Range
Number of Children	1.31	1.00	0 – 6
Number of Adolescents	.67	.83	0 – 6
Marital Duration	12.14	8.43	0 – 53
Income	\$40,150.49	\$43,811.94	\$0 – 751,000
Joint Work Hours	62.66	28.30	0 – 182

Table 4.2

OLS Coefficients of Mothers' Marital Satisfaction by Spousal Time and Family Time.

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Beta	S.E.	$\beta$	Beta	S.E.	$\beta$	Beta	S.E.	$\beta$
Intercept	5.18***	.22		5.06***	.22		5.05***	.22	
Time Alone with Spouse	.30***	.02	.36	.30***	.02	.35	.30***	.02	.35
Family Time	.04**	.01	.07	.02	.01	.04	.02	.01	.04
Relationship with Children				.22***	.03	.16	.23***	.03	.17
Family Time by Child Relationship							.01	.01	.02
Number of Children	.004	.03	.003	-.0001	.03	-.001	.0007	.03	.006
Number of Adolescents	-.02	.04	-.01	-.002	.04	-.001	-.002	.04	-.001
Age	-.01	.006	-.07	-.01	.006	-.06	-.01	.006	-.06
Marital Duration	.005	.006	.03	.003	.006	.02	.003	.006	.02
Marital Number	.08	.06	.03	.14*	.06	.06	.14*	.06	.06
Education	-.03*	.01	-.06	-.03*	.01	-.05	-.03*	.01	-.05
Income	$1.50 \times 10^{-7}$	$6.00 \times 10^{-7}$	-.005	$-1.68 \times 10^{-7}$	$6.00 \times 10^{-7}$	-.006	$-1.50 \times 10^{-8}$	$6.00 \times 10^{-7}$	-.005
Joint Work Hours	-.0001	.001	-.003	-.0008	.001	.005	.0002	.001	.005
R <sup>2</sup>		.14			.16			.16	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.3

OLS Coefficients of Fathers' Marital Satisfaction by Spousal Time and Family Time.

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Beta	S.E.	$\beta$	Beta	S.E.	$\beta$	Beta	S.E.	$\beta$
Intercept	5.70***	.21		5.55***	.21		5.47***	.21	
Time Alone with Spouse	.22***	.02	.28	.21***	.02	.26	.21***	.02	.27
Family Time	.02	.02	.04	-.006	.02	-.01	-.006	.02	-.01
Relationship with Children				.29***	.03	.23	.31***	.03	.24
Family Time by Child Relationship							.02*	.01	.05
Number of Children	-.005	.03	-.004	-.007	.03	-.006	-.003	.03	-.002
Number of Adolescents	-.04	.04	-.03	-.009	.03	-.006	-.01	.03	-.007
Age	-.008	.005	-.06	-.007	.005	-.06	-.008	.005	-.06
Marital Duration	.004	.005	.03	.0002	.005	.001	.0007	.005	.005
Marital Number	.04	.06	.02	.11	.06	.05	.12	.06	.06
Education	-.03**	.009	-.07	-.02*	.009	-.05	-.02*	.009	-.05
Income	$1.51 \times 10^{-7}$	$6.00 \times 10^{-7}$	.005	$2.65 \times 10^{-7}$	$6.00 \times 10^{-7}$	.01	$3.55 \times 10^{-7}$	$6.00 \times 10^{-7}$	.01
Joint Work Hours	-.001	.001	-.03	-.002	.001	-.02	-.001	.001	-.03
R <sup>2</sup>		.09			.13			.14	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

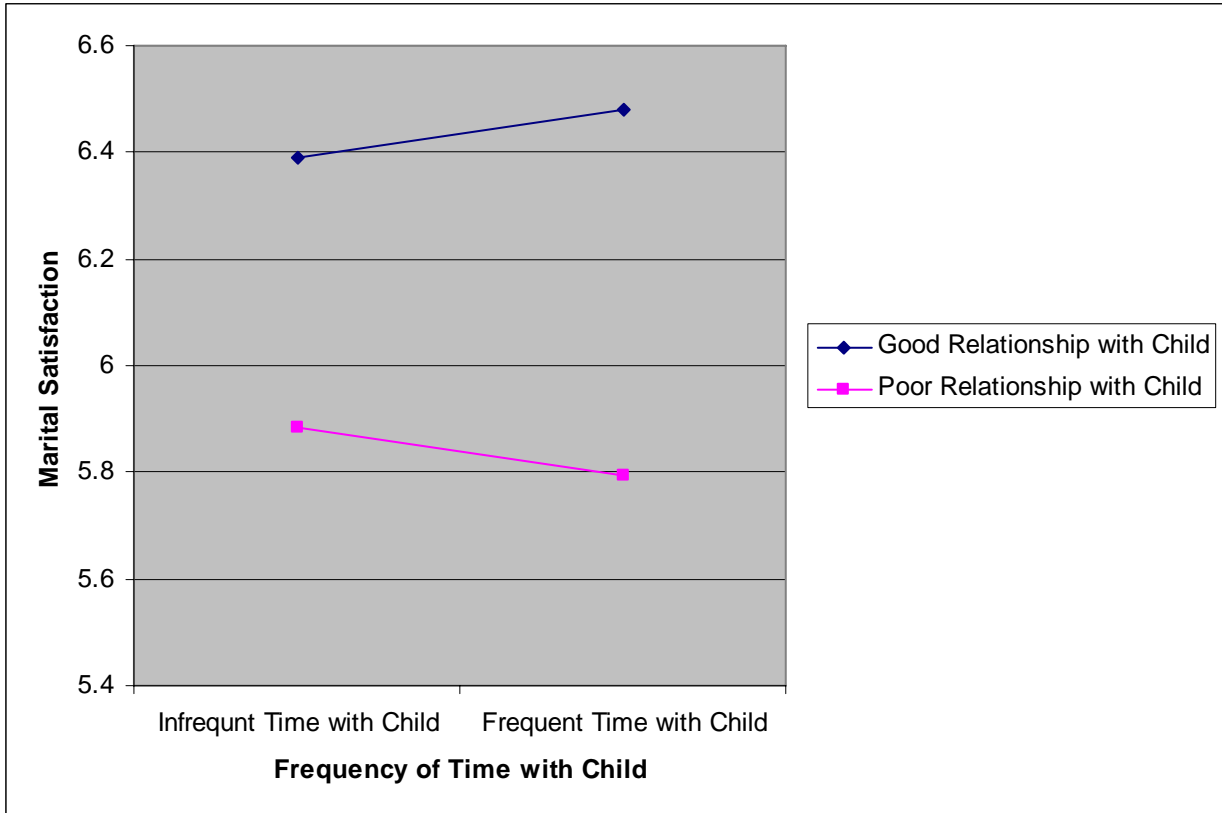


Figure 4.1

Fathers' Marital Satisfaction by the Interaction of Frequency of Time Spent with Child and Quality of Relationship with Child



## Appendix

### Latent Class Analysis to Determine Directionality Issues

This appendix describes the latent class analysis that attempted to discover the direction of the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction. Both variables were equally predictive of each other in the regression models, and were taken from the same wave of data. Thus, questions concerning the direction of the relationship remain.

\_\_\_\_\_ Latent class analysis is a means of identifying multiple groups, or classes, of individuals within a single data set. Latent class analysis assumes that a latent (unobserved) variable accounts for the differences between classes and also completely accounts for the covariance in observed categorical variables that the latent variable influences (Lazarsfield & Henry, 1968; McCutcheon, 1987). This procedure analyzes contingency tables of the categorical variables, or manifest variables, while attempting to find uncorrelated subtables (Lazarsfield & Henry).

Conceptually, latent class analysis has the same purpose of cluster analysis – to identify different subclasses of individuals within a sample. Latent class analysis is advantageous over cluster analysis in that it gives a measure of data fit so that different models can be compared (Rovine, personal communication, January 24, 2007).

Another advantage of latent class analysis is that it searches for a solution that leaves the manifest variables completely uncorrelated within each class. It does this so that the latent variable completely accounts for the covariance between the variables (McCutcheon, 1987). In other words, this latent variable then can be said to cause the interrelationships.

Results from the latent class analysis include the gamma coefficients (the proportion of the sample assigned to each class) and the Rho coefficients (the probability that individuals within a class will select a given response category in each manifest variable). Because the classes are mutually exclusive, the gamma coefficients sum to 1 (e.g. 100% of the sample), and the Rho coefficients sum to 1 for each variable within classes.

In this study, the latent class that may underlie the relationship between family time, spousal time, relationship with children, and marital satisfaction likely encapsulates the idea of relationship emphasis. Spouses may emphasize different parts of their family relationships. Some spouses, for example, may emphasize all their family relationships and thus will be most likely to have higher than average levels of all four variables. Other spouses may put more emphasis on their parental roles and be less engaged in the marriage. Depending on what classes emerge from the data, and how the Rho coefficients are structured within each class, this may give some information as to the direction of the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction.

#### Method

To conduct the latent class analysis, family time, spousal time, relationship with children, and marital satisfaction variables were trichotomized (below the mean, at the mean, and above the mean). Then the variables were subjected to a latent class analyses using PROC LCA. PROC LCA is a SAS procedure developed by statisticians in The Methodology Center at the Pennsylvania State University (Lanza, Lemmon, Schafer, & Collins, 2006).

The latent class analysis was conducted in an exploratory fashion. That is, latent class analyses were conducted with different numbers of classes until the best fitting solution emerged. With four manifest variables that have three categorical responses, hundreds of possible classes could have occurred. The hypothesized nature of the “relationship nature” latent variable that explains these relationships may indicate that a four class solution would fit the data best – not emphasize any family relationships, emphasize marriage and emphasize parenthood, emphasize parenthood and deemphasize marriage, or emphasize both. However, with very little theory to guide the analysis, this latent class analysis is more exploratory than confirmatory. Because the

data was analyzed separately by gender, the exploratory latent class analyses might also find different solutions for wives and husbands.

## Results

The number of classes that fit the data best differed by gender. A five-class solution yielded the best fit for wives. Gamma estimates showed that the proportion of women in each class ranged from .13 of the sample to .33 (see Table A.1). The smallest class was a group that emphasized their marriage. These wives were most likely to have above average marital satisfaction and spousal time and an average relationship with their children. The Rho coefficients showed that wives in this class had about the same probability of being in any one of the three response classes for family time. The largest group of wives, in the “Good Family Relationships” class, also had higher than average marital satisfaction but the majority of these wives also had above average levels of the other three variables.

Two groups had below average satisfaction. Wives in the “Poor Family Relationships” class (16% of the sample) had below average values in all four variables. Wives in the “Family Compensation” class had below average marital satisfaction and spousal time, but above average levels of family time and relationships with children.

Finally, wives in the “Maternal Emphasis” class tend toward average levels of all the variables except family time. More mothers in this group spend above average time with their family than any other group except the wives in the positive family relationship group.

A four-class solution fit the husbands’ data best (see Table A.2); of the four classes that emerged, three were similar to the wives’ classes. Some husbands had below average levels of all four variables. Interestingly, husbands in this “Poor Family Relationships” class spent very little time with their families in contrast to wives in the same class who still spent time with their

family despite poor relationships. Like mothers in the “Maternal Emphasis” class, most fathers in the “Paternal Emphasis” class had average marital satisfaction and spousal time, but above average family time and relationships with their children. Finally, fathers in the “Good Family Relationships” class tended toward above average levels of all four variables.

The one class of husbands that differed from wives was the “Moderate Marital Emphasis” class. These husbands were most likely to report very little family time. Despite being most likely to report low family time, they reported only moderate amounts of spousal time. They were also distinguished by their average marital satisfaction, and average relationship with children. More husbands in this class had below average family time than any other class including the “Poor Family Relationships” class.

#### Discussion

The latent class analysis showed that questions of causal directionality between family time and marital satisfaction might be too simple. A latent variable explains the interrelationships between the four variables of family time, spousal time, relationships with children, and marital satisfaction. This variable assesses what areas of family life (children and marriage) spouses emphasize and deemphasize.

The latent class analyses showed that asserting either that family time enhances marital satisfaction or that marital satisfaction makes family time more likely, oversimplifies the complex relationship between these variables. The wives and husbands in the “Low Family Emphasis” and “Total Family Emphasis” classes constitute about half of the sample, and support both Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 5 because these spouses were most likely to pick above (or below) average family time and marital satisfaction at the same time. The presence of these

large latent classes in the data likely contributed to the positive relationship between family time and marital satisfaction found in the regression analysis.

The other classes demonstrate the complex interrelationships between family time use and family relationships. Parents in the “Maternal Emphasis” and “Paternal Emphasis” seem to focus their time on their children. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, most of them have average marital satisfaction and spousal time. Most fathers in the “Moderate Marital Emphasis” group had little family time, but they all had at least average marital satisfaction and most had at least average relationships with their children. Wives in the “Child Compensation” class had poor marriages but were investing heavily in the relationship that they share with their children. They seemed to be turning toward their children because of poor marital relationships. Thus, the relationship between family time and marital satisfaction is not always positive. With the possible exception of the “Maternal Emphasis” and “Paternal Emphasis” classes, though, few classes support the idea that high amounts of family time are detrimental to marital satisfaction (e.g., Hypothesis 1). Even in these two classes, marital satisfaction was most likely to be average or above. Consequently, the strongest assertion that these analyses can support is that despite qualitative work finding that family time can be negative for parents, on average family time has a positive relationship with couples’ marital satisfaction.

The latent class analysis does show that endogeneity may play a role in the positive relationship between family time and marital satisfaction. Spouses that either emphasize or deemphasize all of their family relationships make up a slim majority of both husbands and wives. Thus, on average, family time and marital satisfaction positively relate. This latent variable of family relationship emphasis deserves more study to see if it spuriously links family

time and marital satisfaction. It would also be interesting to see if this latent variable underlies other marital and family variable relationships.

The latent class analysis also shows gender differences regarding family time and marriage. The largest difference seems to be how free fathers are from the norm of family time. For example, even in the “Low Family Emphasis” group, wives had a probability of .2 of being in the highest family time category. The corresponding probability for “Low Family Emphasis” husbands was only .1. Further, wives never had a probability of being in the below average family time category above .6. However, husbands in the “Moderate Marriage Emphasis” group had a probability of .8 for being in the below average family time category. Thus, husbands seemed to be more free to be spend below average time with their families than were wives.

Future study on these classes may yield more information on the association between time and family relationships. For example, it might be instructive to test whether demographic characteristics at W1 predict class membership. Alternatively, class membership at W1 may predict future behaviors or attitudes such as divorce or adult children’s future reports of their relationship with their parents. In conclusion, although the latent class analysis did not settle questions of how family time and marital satisfaction are related, it did uncover an interesting latent variable that may be useful in future research.

Table A.1

Latent Class Analysis of Wives' Marital Satisfaction, Relationship with Children, Family Time, and Spousal Time.

Class	Marital Emphasis	Low Family Emphasis	Maternal Emphasis	Child Compensation	Total Family Emphasis
<b>Rho Estimates</b>					
<b>Response Category 1</b>					
<b>(Below Average)</b>					
Marital Satisfaction	0.00	.60	.23	.51	.09
Relationship w/ Children	.33	.59	.17	.02	0.00
Family Time	.38	.57	.17	.25	0.23
Spousal Time	0.00	.45	0.00	.71	.11
<b>Response Category 2</b>					
<b>(Average)</b>					
Marital Satisfaction	.20	.29	.55	.33	.15
Relationship w/ Children	.67	.41	.55	.39	0.00
Family Time	.27	.23	.26	.35	.20
Spousal Time	.18	.40	.64	.29	.32
<b>Response Category 3</b>					
<b>(Above Average)</b>					
Marital Satisfaction	.80	.11	.23	.15	.76
Relationship w/ Children	0.00	0.00	.28	.59	1.00
Family Time	.36	.20	.57	.40	.59
Spousal Time	.82	.15	.36	0.00	.57
Gamma Estimates	.13	.16	.18	.20	.33

Note.  $G^2(36, N=1949) = 49.85, p > .05$ .



Table A.2

## Latent Class Analysis of Husbands' Marital Satisfaction, Relationship with Children, Family

Time, and Spousal Time.

Class	Low Family Emphasis	Moderate Marital Emphasis	Paternal Emphasis	Total Family Emphasis
<b>Rho Estimates</b>				
<b>Response Category 1</b>				
<b>(Below Average)</b>				
Marital Satisfaction	1.00	0.00	.31	0.00
Relationship w/ Children	.46	.35	.10	.11
Family Time	.67	.78	0.00	.26
Spousal Time	.48	.29	.27	.15
<b>Response Category 2</b>				
<b>(Average)</b>				
Marital Satisfaction	0.00	.64	.66	.05
Relationship w/ Children	.34	.42	.41	.17
Family Time	.23	.22	.34	.31
Spousal Time	.40	.48	.42	.32
<b>Response Category 3</b>				
<b>(Above Average)</b>				
Marital Satisfaction	0.00	.36	.03	.95
Relationship w/ Children	.20	.23	.49	.72
Family Time	.10	0.00	.66	.43
Spousal Time	.12	.23	.31	.53
Gamma Estimates	.17	.21	.23	.39

Note.  $G^2(45, N=1949) = 50.44, p > .05$

## Vita

Jeffrey Dew is a dual-title PhD candidate in the department of Human Development and Family Studies and the program of Demography. His research focuses on the relationship between understudied familial resources and marital functioning. His initial research focused on the relationship between financial assets and debts and couples' marital distress and satisfaction. He has published or presented four studies in this line of research. The first study questioned the assumption found in prior literature that the only role of assets and debt in marriage is to alleviate or enhance, respectively, feelings of economic pressure. Two related studies analyzed how debt and other financial issues related to recently-married couples' and retired couples' marriages. His most recent project tests whether debts and assets predict union formation among young adults. This work on assets, debt, and marriage culminated in an invitation to write a chapter on marriage and finances for a forthcoming edited book on consumer finances.

Jeff's dissertation examined another understudied but important marital aspect – couples' time use. Although many studies have examined the trends in parent-child time over the past three decades, little research has examined trends in the amount of time that spouses spend together. Further, few studies have investigated the marital implications of how contemporary spouses allocate their time. Jeff's dissertation examined these research questions.

Jeff also enjoys teaching. In the three family courses he taught, he strove to make the course material relevant and accessible to the students. For example, to show an advanced family studies class how finances can influence interactions, he paired students and had them try to remain solvent in a financial simulation. He particularly enjoys interacting with students and watching them relate course material to their own lives.